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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

AN UNSHAKEN TRUST

AND

OTHER SERMONS

AN UNSHAKEN TRUST

AND

OTHER SERMONS

BY

J. B. HAWTHORNE, D. D.

WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

EDGAR ESTES FOLK, D. D.

PHILADELPHIA

AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. J. B. Hawthorne, the author of the following sermons, stands easily as the prince of Southern Baptist preachers; and if I should leave off the qualifying word Baptist, and even the word Southern, I should not perhaps miss the mark very far. At the meeting of the Baptist Young People's Union of America in Chattanooga, in July, 1897, Dr. Hawthorne preached what was called the Convention sermon. It was in his best style. A brother from the North afterward remarked to a Southerner: "I didn't know you had anybody down here who could preach like that." "Oh," replied the Southerner, "we have plenty of them." But I rather doubt it, though admiring the loyal pride of the Southerner.

Dr. Hawthorne comes by his eloquence honestly. His father, Rev. Kedar Hawthorne, was a sturdy pioneer Baptist preacher of Alabama. As the result of his labors he baptized more people than any minister who ever lived in Alabama—between five and six thousand. A prosperous planter, he preached at first without salary. He was a constituent mem-

ber of the Southern Baptist Convention. The son entered the ministry at about twenty-two years of age. He had received a liberal education for those days, at the Military Academy, Camden, Ala., and at Howard College, where he took both a literary and a theological course.

His eloquence early attracted attention, and pulpits all over the land were open to him. He filled successively the pulpits of the Broad Street Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala.; the First Baptist Church, Selma, Ala.; Franklin Square Baptist Church, Baltimore, Md.; Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky. (of which he was the first pastor, and whose beautiful house of worship was erected under his ministry); Tabernacle Baptist Church, New York City; the First Baptist Church, Montgomery, Ala.; the First Baptist Church, Richmond, Va.; the First Baptist Church, Atlanta, Ga.; and the First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn., where he is now, and where I trust he will long remain. All of these pulpits he filled with distinguished ability, large congregations attending upon his ministry. The members of the various churches grew in numbers and in all Christian graces. His last three pastorates—in Richmond, Atlanta, and Nashville—have been notably successful. His audiences at the First Baptist Church, Nashville, are only limited by the capacity of the building.

Dr. Hawthorne is a natural orator. In person he is six feet four inches in height, with a massive frame, which gives him a commanding presence, and secures attention before he utters a word. He is a very Apollo in appearance, as well as an Apollos in eloquence. His face is smooth shaven, mobile, and expressive. His features are classic, not unlike those of Edwin Booth. In repose they are strong and manly. In the heat of speech they are capable of expressing every emotion, from a smile of sympathy to a storm of passion. His voice is round and full, highly cultivated, well modulated, and always under perfect control. In fact, with him, as it was with Spurgeon, his voice forms no small element in his success as an orator. His enunciation is clear and distinct, so that each word can be easily heard by every one in the audience. His manner at first is slow and deliberate. He moves off with the calm dignity of an ocean steamer, or of an avalanche just loosed from its moorings. But as he warms up to his subject he becomes like the steamer in mid-ocean, proudly plowing the mighty waters, or like the avalanche as it rushes onward and sweeps all before it. He reminds one in his manner, not of the foaming, dashing mountain torrent, but rather of the broad, majestic river.

His mental characteristics correspond with his physical. He is a strong, clear thinker. He is

more the rhetorician than the logician, more the poet than the historian, more the orator than the debater. But he is by no means lacking in the qualities of the logician, the historian, and the debater. He knows what he wants to say and he says it—says it beautifully, says it grandly, but he says it, and says it so that every one understands what he meant to say. In the preparation of his sermons he is most painstaking, spending hours and often days upon them. Most of them are written in full, but many of them are either extemporaneous or only partially written. He is fortunate in having his son, Mr. C. W. Hawthorne, as his stenographer. To him he dictates his written sermons after careful study upon them. They are taken down on the typewriter in large letters. Dr. Hawthorne then goes over the sermon, underscores a catch word or two in each sentence, and takes the manuscript to the pulpit with him, but he has so familiarized himself with the sermon that he makes but little reference to the manuscript, and the listener is scarcely aware that he has it before him at all. His style is smooth, elevated, dignified, never low or vulgar. He seldom makes attempts at wit, or tries to play upon the emotions. But not infrequently smiles light up the countenances of his audience and tears steal down their cheeks. He abounds in illustrations, but they are always of a

high order, often either scriptural or historical. He is more of a topical than a textual preacher, discussing great themes rather than specific texts.

But while nature has done much for Dr. Hawthorne, grace has done more. His sermons are not simply cold, beautiful, intellectual compositions. They come from his heart as well as from his head. He is more of a preacher to the head than to the heart, perhaps, but he reaches the heart also—reaches the heart through the head. In all that he says there is an atmosphere of spirituality, a tone of devotion. Back of the beautiful sentences uttered in so eloquent a manner you feel the throbbing brain and the pulsing heart of a man, drawing you into close sympathy with him. It is said that when people heard Æschines they would go away saying, "Isn't he a splendid orator?" When they heard Demosthenes they would exclaim, with clenched fists and flashing eyes, "Let us fight Philip." Dr. Hawthorne, in these respects, is a combination of both Æschines and Demosthenes as an orator. People admire him and at the same time they are moved to want to be and do better. Dr. Broadus says that "Eloquence is so speaking as not merely to convince the judgment, kindle the imagination, and move the feelings, but to give a powerful impulse to the will." Dr. Hawthorne has all these elements of true oratory, including the last.

The writer remembers very vividly an experience of his own which illustrates this point. It was at the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, at Montgomery, Ala., in 1886. Dr. Hawthorne preached the Convention sermon. His text was: "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" The sermon was a plea for courage and boldness in dealing with the foes of the Living God all about us now. At its conclusion he asked: "Who will be an Elijah to stand against the foes of God?" The young preacher sitting on the front seat and listening intently to every word of the sermon, was wrought up to the point of enthusiasm, and it was all he could do to keep from jumping up on the seat and exclaiming, "I will, doctor, I will." This experience is probably only one of many others of a similar nature which might be related by those who have sat under the ministry of Dr. Hawthorne.

A large part of Dr. Hawthorne's power consists in his intense earnestness. He evidently feels every word he says, and he wants you to feel its importance also. He does not speak simply to please, but to move, to help. He has a practical aim in it all, which he keeps, and makes you keep, constantly in view. He drives continually to that end. He is of a very positive nature. He always takes his stand on one side or the other of any question. And he goes all the way, whichever way he goes. He

has convictions, and he is absolutely fearless in expressing them. He may not always be right, but he is always positive. His disposition is of the combative order. His "hot Southern blood," as he calls it, makes him somewhat impulsive. He is never so much at home as when attacking something, especially the evils of the day, and above all the liquor traffic, which is his pet abomination. When denouncing these evils his sarcasm is most biting, his invectives withering. At such times, as some one said of Daniel Webster, "each word weighs a ton." His sentences crack like a whip and cut like a knife. He seems the spirit of eloquence incarnate, the genius of oratory in the midst of a battle, where thought is powder, words are bullets, and he himself is the heavy artillery, volleying and thundering against the foe. At other times, when there is no special battle against sin raging, he is as smooth as a river, but always interesting, always helpful, always elegant and eloquent. Many of his sentences are polished until they shine with resplendent beauty, but the beauty is that of the mountain rather than of the flower, a lofty grandeur rather than an insipid prettiness. He is an orator; but he is pre-eminently a pulpit orator, discussing noble themes in a manner befitting their dignity. He believes thoroughly in those grand old Baptist principles which have come down to us

from Christ and his apostles, often through fire and through blood, and which he has loved to preach for so many years. But in his advocacy of them he never forgets that he is a Christian gentleman. He puts Christ before the church, the blood before the water always. He prefers the spirit of Christianity to its form, the substance to the shadow. Rites and ceremonies he abominates, and hypocritical pretensions his soul abhors.

His private character is of the purest and loftiest type. He loves virtue, loathes vice; admires honesty, and despises meanness or trickery. It is this high character which gives him to a large extent his popularity both as a man and as a preacher, and which adds weight and dignity to his utterances. He is oftentimes regarded as cold and haughty, holding his brethren at arm's length from him. People at first are disposed to stand somewhat in awe of him. But never was there a greater mistake made about a man. He is as simple and unaffected as a child, easily approachable by any one, companionable in the highest degree, warm-hearted, loving, and lovable, with a sincerity and transparency about his character which make it very beautiful. I do not know any one who has received as much praise that is as completely unspoiled by it, and as apparently unconscious of it. Through it all he is the same simple, genial Christian, the same

noble, manly man, brave as a lion, but tender as a woman and generous to a fault. It is this individuality, this strong personality, this manliness of character, that constitutes one of the chief sources of his power. For after all, our sermons are simply the reflection of our characters, the projection of ourselves into the pulpit. He is a man among men. But his manhood is subdued, refined, ennobled, guided, dominated by the principles of Christ. To him to live is Christ. Christ lives in him, and the life he now lives is the Christ life. When he speaks he speaks for Christ, and Christ speaks through him.

Preaching is hard work, the hardest work in the world. It brings into play every part of a person, physical, mental, and spiritual. The half-hour during which he stands before the people to preach puts a tremendous strain upon the preacher, a draft upon all his forces. It is a supreme test of the man. But while hard it is glorious business when it is glorious, though most inglorious when it is inglorious. The privilege of being an ambassador for Christ, of standing before men and beseeching them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, is one which angels might well covet. What preacher worthy of the name is there who does not "love to tell the story of Jesus and his love," whose soul does not thrill with rapture as he repeats the mes-

sage entrusted to him? Oh, the joy of that hour! What joy can compare with it? There is no happiness on earth to equal it, and I doubt if there will be any in heaven superior to it. And then when he who delivers the message is one who has sat often at the Saviour's feet and dwelt in his inner chambers and learned his holiest secrets, who has looked into the King's face, who is himself a master of assemblies, and can sway people with his words as the grain is swayed in the breeze, what sacred bliss, what infinite joy! Such is the experience of Dr. Hawthorne.

Dr. Hawthorne has a lecture on the subject of "The World's Great Orators," which he recently delivered in his own pulpit on a week night to an audience which filled the large house, despite the fact that an admission fee was charged. Of course he did not include himself in the list of the world's great orators. But he might have done so. For among them all there have been few who have combined more of the graces and beauties and at the same time the triumphs of true oratory than are combined in him.

He is now sixty-one years of age. But despite some recent ailments resulting from malaria and grip, his general health is good. His constitution is strong and robust. For one who has done the work he has he is a well-preserved man. The gray

hairs are just beginning to show plainly in his long, black, glossy locks. He ought to have ten or even twenty years more of good solid work for the Master in him. I trust he may be spared to accomplish it. But it can be only a few years at most that he shall be with us. When he falls it will be like the falling of a giant oak in the midst of the forest, like the falling of some bright particular star from the heavens. Those of us who are living will hardly look upon his like again. He seems

> As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm ;
> Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

John of Antioch was called Chrysostom, "the golden-mouthed"; Bossuet, "the eagle of eloquence"; Edward Everett, "the silver-tongued orator." All of these expressions might be applied to Dr. Hawthorne. It seems to me, though, that there is one adjective which peculiarly fits him—magnificent. Magnificent in appearance, magnificent in diction, magnificent in character, magnificent as a man, magnificent as a preacher—"Hawthorne the Magnificent," so let it be.

The following sermons, after being preached in his own pulpit, were published in the "Baptist and Reflector," where they were read with the greatest

delight and profit by a large circle of readers. Among them, it should be stated, are some of the best sermons of his life, which he has been especially requested to put in permanent form. The published sermons lack much in losing the commanding presence of the author, the force of his personality, the fire of his flashing eyes, the modulation of his voice, all of which go far toward impressing them upon his audience. But still one finds in them his eloquent diction, his elevated thought, his classic illustrations, and breathing through all his earnest purpose and his noble spirit, which make even the written sermons exceedingly interesting and helpful. That those published in this volume may prove such to the reader, leading him to a higher, better, truer, more consecrated Christian life, I most earnestly join my prayers with those of the distinguished author.

EDGAR ESTES FOLK.

NASHVILLE, TENN.

1

AN UNSHAKEN TRUST

"Let come on me what *will*. . . Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Job 13 : 13, 15.

God delights to honor a true man. He takes pleasure in placing him where the world may see the excellence of his character and feel the power of his life. But before he sets him in a regal place and encircles his brow with a crown of glory, he suffers him to be tried. He subjects him to a baptism of fire. He lets the world and Satan smite him with manifold afflictions. In this way he prepared such men as Chrysostom, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Carey, and Judson for their exalted stations and work. Having suffered with Christ, they now reign with him over the hearts and lives of men.

God saw in his servant Job a man in whom he was well pleased. "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" Such integrity must not be permitted to dwell in obscurity. It must be exalted

and made visible to men of every land and age. But as a preparation for such exaltation, Job must pass through great tribulation.

What God loves the devil hates. What God delights to honor the devil loves to defame. When God said, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil," the devil answered, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." By this Satan means that Job is a hypocrite, that selfishness is behind all his piety and fealty to God, and that if deprived of his temporal prosperity he would be utterly wicked and faithless.

The devil to-day is just what he has ever been. The same sneer is on his face and the same venom is on his lips. Where is the man in this city, in this country, or in the wide world, who fears God and eschews evil in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, against whom some emissary of Satan has not brought the charge of insincerity and hypocrisy? How often we hear the remark, "Such a man belongs to the church because it helps him in his temporal affairs. He gets the patronage of the

church in his business. But let misfortune come upon him, let him lose his custom, and let his business go down, and he will make shipwreck of his faith." Who has not heard the mean indictment that ministers of the gospel are mere hirelings, that they are preaching for pay, that they are making merchandise of religion, that they have no faith in what they preach, that they care nothing for the souls of men, and that if their emoluments were taken from them they would desert their flocks, go over to the ranks of infidelity, and curse the Christ whose gospel they have preached?

If the men who make these charges are sincere, they not only repudiate Christianity, but pronounce themselves utterly faithless toward men. They believe that man is too selfish to be able to approximate an act of disinterested goodness. They believe that all his conduct toward God and his fellow-men is inspired solely by the desire and purpose to advance his own earthly interests.

Just that is what the devil professes to believe, and you know what the devil is. He has neither pity nor respect for man. He is man's enemy. His work is to degrade and damn him. Men who have no confidence in their fellows have none in themselves. Believing the whole human race to be entirely selfish, all their transactions are inspired solely by the love of self. They use their fellow-men only

as instruments to accomplish their selfish ends. If it is to their interest to applaud a man they bind the laurel on his brow, but if they can put money in their purse or elevate themselves to political office by detraction and slander, there is nothing in their depraved hearts to restrain them.

No man is better than his faith. He who has faith in mankind, he who sees among the ruins of the fall traces of a primeval glory which through God's infinite grace may be recovered, he who believes that there is human pity that is real, and human love that is pure, he who believes that there is a Godward side to man's being which is capable of real fellowship with the true and good, is man's friend. But he who believes that the central and ruling principle of every human heart is the love of self and that human aspiration can rise to nothing higher and nobler than the gratification of self, is man's enemy. Like Satan, conscious of his own depravity and vileness, he would drag earth and heaven down to a level with himself.

How miserable must such a man be ! In all the broad world of humanity he sees nothing that is worthy to be loved and honored, and nothing in which he is willing to confide and look for sympathy and support in the day of trouble. Satan said he was going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it. He is the most miserable being in

the universe because he loves nothing and confides in nothing. Peace has forsaken the breast of that man who believes that the regnant principle of every human heart is unmitigated selfishness. Such a belief unfits him for the enjoyment of any blessing. He looks upon every man as his enemy. He regards all human conduct as deceptive and every offer of kindness as the forerunner of a base betrayal. Regarding himself as a devil incarnate in a world of devils, he walks up and down the earth, hoping to find some grains of comfort in reviling and cursing his fellow-men. His years are all winter, his world all hollow and false, and his universe all gloomy and ghastly.

Young men, the days are evil. The moral atmosphere which you breathe is laden with poison. All around you are men whose material prosperity depends upon your degradation. Just to the extent that they corrupt your minds and lives they add to their ill-gotten gains. These men would tell you that man is incurably selfish, and therefore incapable of disinterested goodness. They would tell you that those Christian temples are only monuments to the hollowness and hypocrisy of the men who built them. They would tell you that religion is only a cloak, under which men seeking their own aggrandizement conceal the iniquity of their hearts. They would tell you that even the men who have been

leaders of our sacramental hosts, and whom the world has loved and honored for their Christian virtues, were deceivers of mankind and went down to their graves with a lie on their lips.

They would teach you to despise the faith of the Christian mother who nurtured your childhood and to despise the counsels of the Christian father who breathed upon you his dying benediction. They would persuade you to forsake the Christian sanctuary and spend your Sabbaths in club rooms. They would tell you that Ingersoll's tracts are better than the Bible, and the lascivious songs of the beer saloon sweeter than the songs of Zion. They would entreat you to hate and cry down every man who would put restraints upon unholy lust or who would insist upon honesty in business and fair dealing at the ballot box.

These are the men who set themselves up as your teachers, and who would give direction to your lives. Will you accept such a leadership? Will you allow them to destroy your reverence for all things sacred? Will you suffer them to pluck from your hearts the faith that was planted there by a mother's love, and the lessons of honor and rectitude received from a father's lips? Will you exchange the cup of the Lord for the cup of devils? Will you forsake Christ for Belial? If not, then join in holy alliance with those who are fighting the worst ad-

versaries of God's truth and man's welfare, and help to generate a moral atmosphere in which this upas tree of infidelity, blasphemy, and dishonesty cannot live.

Are there any honest men in the world? The devil says there are none. Among the millions of men and women who wear the Christian regalia and follow the crimson banner of the cross, are there any who love truth and righteousness more than themselves, and whose allegiance to God's cause cannot be shaken by any tempest of adversity? The devil says there are none. He is a liar, and the truth is not in him. His indictment is a libel as black as the starless night to which eternal justice has consigned him.

I am not blind to the world's depravity. I recognize the fact that among the millions who claim to be believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are many whose hearts and lives are stained with the deepest hypocrisy. But virtue has not forsaken the world; honesty, honor, and patriotism still live. In the marts of trade there are thousands of men whose moral integrity has withstood every temptation to wrong dealing. The assumption of certain political henchmen that every American voter has his price is absolutely false. That there is a large element of our population who have no appreciation of the dignity and responsi-

bility of citizenship, I do not deny. That vast sums of money have been raised to corrupt the ballot, and that thousands of ignorant and impecunious wretches have bartered their birthright, I am compelled to admit. But patriotism lives; and I believe will live forever in the hearts of the American people. The majority of the property holders of this country in the last Federal election voted for what they believed to be for the welfare of the whole country. And there are millions of the horny-handed sons of toil in our workshops and factories, on our farms and in our mines, who would resent as an unpardonable insult to their manhood any attempt to purchase their ballot or to intimidate them in the exercise of their constitutional right to vote according to their honest convictions.

Unselfish devotion to Christ's kingdom is one of the most manifest realities of this world. The pages of history are luminous with the names of men who were loyal to God in the midst of affluence and luxury, and who were equally loyal in the depths of poverty.

I have gone to the almshouses of this country and found men who were once merchant princes. They were Christians in the heyday of their temporal prosperity, but still better Christians in the dark day of adversity. All such facts demonstrate that man is capable of disinterested fealty to God,

and that when he plants himself by faith on the foundation of God's eternal truth, not even the gates of hell can prevail against him.

In the sacred narrative before us Satan declares that selfishness is at the bottom of Job's uprightness and piety, and that if Job's material possessions were taken from him he would not only forsake religion, but curse the Holy Being whom he had worshiped and served. God accepts the challenge and suffers the test to be made. All that Job has of temporal treasure is placed within the power of Satan. From what follows we may judge what would become of the possessions of any God-fearing and upright man, if Satan were allowed absolute control of them. If it were proclaimed to-day by the civil authorities of this country that for the next week all laws against vice and crime would be annulled, and that all evil-doers should, within that period, be absolutely free to do whatever their malign passions should prompt them to do, what a reign of terror would ensue. Scarcely a Christian home would escape the torch. Stores would be rifled, banks robbed, and factories and churches demolished.

That such results would follow the removal of all restraints from evil-minded men we can readily believe when we see how the upright man in the land of Uz fares in the hands of Satan. At a time when

he had no thought of evil, and imagined himself secure beneath the protecting arm of Him whom he had served so faithfully, there came a messenger and said: "The oxen were plowing and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away; yea, they have slain thy servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

Hardly had this messenger finished his sad story before there came another, who said: "The fire of God is fallen from heaven and hath burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

While he was yet speaking there came another messenger, who said: "The Chaldeans made out three bands and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

What next? Before this man had uttered the last word of his fearful message there came another, who said: "Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; and behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

Terrible agents were these in the hands of the

arch-demon. Sabeans, Chaldeans, whirlwind, and fire combined their fury against one defenseless man.

What is the result upon Job's mind, upon Job's faith and integrity? Sheep and camels all stolen, servants burned to ashes, the bodies of his children mangled and dead beneath the ruins of a dwelling. Surely, if it be possible for temporal calamity to make a godly man faithless, Job will now fulfill the prophecy of Satan, renounce his religion, and curse the God whom he had worshiped.

But how does this servant of the Most High deport himself as he contemplates the wreck of his earthly fortune and hopes? Does he fall out with religion and proclaim it a vain thing to serve God? Nay. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly, but fell to the ground and worshiped him, saying: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

What is the significance of this story? It is God Almighty's refutation of a lie. Satan says man worships his maker only for temporal advantage. God answers, "It is false," and proves it by the conduct of his servant Job.

From the birth of true religion to this hour, Satan, speaking through human lips, has charged that men who worship God are inspired with no higher motive than the desire of temporal aggran-

dizement; and though the contradiction has been made by millions of holy men who preserved their moral and religious integrity in the depths of poverty, amid the gloom of the dungeon and the flames of the stake, the lie still lives and men still repeat it with all the malignity and venom of their Satanic master.

As the old patriarch Job stood upright and unswerving amid the desolation that surrounded him, God said: "Still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him to destroy him without cause."

The Lord God is proud of the triumphs of his people, and when the registering angel records a victory for the least of his flock banners wave from all the hills of heaven and the enraptured millions of the blest tune their harps anew and rise to higher notes of praise.

Satan, discomfited in his first attempt to overthrow this righteous man, proposes to renew the attack and challenges the Almighty to subject Job to another test: "Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face."

God knows his people. He knows that neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, can separate them from him.

He is not afraid that they will forsake him in the hour of their darkness and distress. Having this confidence in their loyalty, he accepts this new challenge. "So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown."

Poor Job! Behold him, pity him. Covered with disease the most foul and loathsome, his flesh rotting and falling from the bones, stinking with corruption, he sits down in ashes and scrapes himself with a potsherd. Conscious of his integrity, knowing that he had done nothing to merit such suffering, doubtless his breast was the arena of bitter conflicts and the temptation to renounce God came upon him with tremendous power.

But to add to the severity of his trial, the devil enters into the wife of the patriarch. So loathsome has he become, so sickening and horrid the stench of his running sores, that she, the partner of his life, the wife of his bosom, and the mother of his children, is constrained to forsake him. Sick, disgusted, and horrified, she turns away from him with the exhortation to curse God and die. But under the pressure of all this suffering, desolate, forsaken, an object of loathing even to the wife who up to this hour had been loyal and faithful, Job did not sin. The loss of property, the loss of servants, the loss of children, the loss of health, the loss of all human

affection and sympathy, presented a mighty temptation, and yet he serenely faced it and conquered it.

Still another trial awaits him. Worse than poverty, worse than disease, worse than the death of children, and worse than the desertion by one's own flesh, is the loss of one's good name. As Job was a great sufferer, men looked upon him as a great sinner. They regarded his calamities as only the just and inevitable penalty for some villainous transgression which he had sought to hide beneath the covering of a religious profession.

The pangs of dying are sweet in comparison with the anguish which an upright man feels in being subjected to a base-born suspicion which he is powerless to remove. And yet, when God laid this burden upon the heart of Job, his faith did not fail him. Loving and serving the Lord for the Lord's sake, cleaving to the truth because it was truth, and holding on to the right because it was right, he said: "Let come what will, . . . Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

When men stand up before the world and declare that the Christian's faith is unreal and that his Christian labors and self-denials are inspired only by the hope of temporal advantage I almost wonder that the sheeted dead do not rise from their graves and rebuke them.

Was it for temporal gain that Paul was obedient

to the heavenly vision which called him into Macedonia? Was it for temporal gain that he submitted to five Jewish scourgings and three Roman flagellations? Was it for temporal gain that he endured the prolonged insolence of provincial magistrates and the gnashing fury of frenzied mobs? Was it for temporal gain that he wore for three years a felon's chain and slept in a felon's cell? Was it for temporal gain that he suffered the loss of all things and at last expired at the hands of a Roman headsman? Was it for any earthly good that Francis Xavier carried the gospel into India? Was it for any temporal reward that he suffered among the poor, degraded pearl fishers of the straits of Manaar? Was it for any hope of earthly gain that he preached the gospel where earthquakes, pestilence, and savagery imperiled his life at every moment?

No! No! It would be flattery to call that man mean who would question the sincerity of such a life or attempt to cast a shadow upon such a name.

In the present generation there are moral heroes who will not suffer by comparison with those whose names illumine the pages of history. Immediately around us are men and women who, amid conflicts dark and dire, hold to truth and virtue and God with a faith as unflinching and firm as that of the patriarch Job. Go with me to-morrow and I will

conduct you into a chamber where lies the wasted and skeleton form of a man who for months and years has not had one hour's exemption from pain, and yet he is uncomplaining and peaceful. With the cold sweat of agony standing on his brow and his whole body quivering with anguish he is wont to say: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

Follow me again and I will lead you beneath a humble roof where the deepest and saddest poverty dwells, poverty unpitied because unknown to the world. There a frail woman, too noble to beg, plies her needle from morn till midnight that her fatherless children may not lack for bread to-morrow. No word of complaint drops from her lips; but grateful to God for a little meal in the barrel and a rude shelter above her head, and looking forward to a heritage of peace and plenty beyond the stars, she exclaims: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" "Bless the Lord, oh, my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name!"

Go with me to yonder city of the dead. There beneath a weeping willow a mother kneels at the grave of her only child. Sorrow has plowed deep furrows on her face, but the light of hope is in her eye. As her tears fall and mingle with the dust we hear her say: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

I dare say that in the secret solitude of hearts before me to-day there are wounds and aching griefs which only heaven can cure. There are some here whose cup is all bitterness, and yet day by day they look up to God and say : "Let come what will. . . Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Such men and women are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. They are witnesses for God and his truth whose testimony can never be refuted. May God multiply their seed and their triumphs until the last infidel voice is silenced and the last skeptic shall lift his eyes to the cross and exclaim, in the language of the Roman soldier : "Truly this was the Son of God."

II

EBENEZER

"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." 1 Sam. 7 : 12.

THE condition of the Hebrew commonwealth when Eli the priest died was very deplorable. The people were not only sadly ignorant, but had wandered far from virtue and God. Their country was often invaded by the armies of surrounding nations. Their most sacred treasure, the ark of the covenant, had been captured and carried away. They were oppressed, broken in spirit, given to idolatry, and immersed in vice. Such was their condition when Samuel became their priest and judge.

Commiserating their degraded and suffering condition, this good man called the people together, recounted their sins, and revealed to them the will of God. He told them that if they would sincerely repent and put away their strange gods, the Lord would deliver them out of the hands of the Philistines. They hearkened to his voice, forsook the worship of idols, and returned to the service of the true and living God.

While they were gathered together at Mizpeh, they drew water from the wells and poured it out upon the ground before the Lord, saying, "We have sinned against the Lord." This ceremony was a symbolic act by which they expressed their deep contrition for their apostasy. In this repentant state Samuel found it easy to settle all difficulties among them. Their quarrels and feuds were readily adjusted, and peace and harmony reigned throughout the camp.

When the Philistines heard that they were gathered together at Mizpeh, they at once moved up in great numbers against them. The Israelites were alarmed, but Samuel soon quieted their fears. He took a sucking lamb, made a burnt offering of it, cried unto the Lord for help, and the Lord heard him. When the Philistines drew near, God spoke in a mighty roll of thunder from the heavens. Smitten with fear they fled. The Israelites pursued and smote them until they came to Beth-car. Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called it Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

This rude stone was a simple and inexpensive device, but no monument ever reared by human hands was more pleasing to God.

That stone was put there in no boastful spirit. It was not a reminder of what they had done, but

of what God had done for them. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

If troubles should come again, if another enemy should march against them, that little stony monument would help them to remember what God had done for them in a season of great peril and inspire them to look to the same divine source for succor and deliverance.

There are events in every man's life that are worthy of special recognition. There are signal interpositions of divine power which shield him from peril and save him from suffering. He owes it to God and to himself to commemorate such events. It is well for every one of us to keep in mind every special manifestation of God's guiding and preserving care. We should never begin a new year without raising an Ebenezer, to testify that hitherto the Lord has helped us.

In the history of our households there are events which mark the genesis of new and potent influences for good or evil. Births, marriages, deaths, loss of property, sicknesses, escapes from imminent peril, are events which have a vital bearing on the character and destinies of families. Every man among you can remember occurrences which deeply stirred his inner being and helped to strengthen his love of virtue, or helped to sink him to a lower level of moral life. These things he should never forget.

The Christian should persistently cultivate the recollection of the beginnings of his spiritual life. Every day he should go back in thought to his first conviction of sin, his mourning over divine goodness and mercy rejected and despised, and his despair when it seemed to him that there was "no eye to pity and no arm to save." Every day he should recall the hour when God responded to his cry for help, when the darkness that shrouded his soul disappeared, when he saw the Lord God, merciful and gracious, bending over him, and heard his pitying voice, saying, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." Every day he should review his spiritual life, and celebrate the occasions when God empowered him to overcome mighty temptations and "put to flight the armies of the aliens." Every day he should recall his seasons of spiritual exaltation and rapture. Every day he should sing:

> Through many dangers, toils, and cares,
> I have already come;
> 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
> And grace will take me home.

Man's truest and deepest life is in the unseen realm of his spiritual being. No events in his history deserve such celebration as the victories which he wins on the battlefield of his own soul. In comparison with his triumphs over his own un-

righteous thoughts and affections no outward achievement is worthy of notice.

When a man is elected to a great political office how promptly his friends come forward and shower congratulations upon him. Bonfires, illuminations, booming cannon, and vast processions are employed to celebrate his victory.

If the newspapers should announce to-morrow that a rich uncle had died and left me a million dollars, or that by some bold financial adventure of my own I had become immensely rich, I imagine that my friends would be almost drunk with joy. But how few would congratulate me if it were known that I had triumphed over some mighty temptation to wrong-doing, and had risen to some higher level of moral and spiritual power.

God's greatest gifts are bestowed upon the soul. While we should never despise external blessings, while we should not undervalue wealth, office, and distinction, we should remember that the things that are not seen are vastly better and more enduring than those which come within the range of our mortal vision.

Man's first and strongest aspiration should be for imperial sway over his own inner being. To uproot some unholy affection, to extirpate some ignoble ambition, to triumph over some revengeful feeling, to crucify some lurking jealousy—these are achieve-

ments which, in God's eye, eclipse the conquest of a nation. My brother, if you have won such victories raise your Ebenezer, and thus testify to the world that hitherto the Lord has helped you.

We are constrained to confess that we are shamefully forgetful of the favors which God's helping hand has bestowed upon us. We imagine that we are the architects of our own fortune. We seldom think of God as having anything to do with our successes in life. We are almost blind to the manifestations of his guiding, protecting, and supporting presence.

I have spent whole nights in gazing into heaven. The glory of God beaming from the silent stars would not let me sleep. I felt that it would be a sin to close my eyes beneath that magnificent display of Jehovah's wisdom, power, and goodness. What are man's inventions and creations, what are all the productions of human power and skill, compared to those frescoes of light and beauty which God has painted on the midnight sky? But while day speaks to day, and night to night repeats the story of God's goodness and love to man, how feeble are the exhibitions of our appreciation of what he has done for us!

God keeps a record of the blessings with which he enriches our lives, and what is worthy of record in heaven is not unworthy of remembrance on earth.

Let us make some external record of the special displays of God's love and mercy along our earthly pilgrimage. Let us set up some visible memorial somewhere that will serve to remind us and others of the great things the Lord has done for us. There are many ways in which this can be done. Every man's home should be a sort of museum, a place for the exhibition of souvenirs—things that will keep alive the memory of every year and month of the family history.

I have a large collection of photographs in my home. They are the likenesses of persons connected with the churches and congregations which I have served. Sometimes my wife and I open the big box in which these things are preserved, take them out one by one and carefully study them. Each one of them revives a hundred blessed memories, and in going through the collection we pass through forty years of history. We have numerous pictures of our own children—pictures taken at intervals between their infancy and the present. In looking at them, we go over the history of our two boys. As soon as our eyes fall upon one of them, we recall the place where it was taken and group around it a hundred events in that period of the child's life.

There is one peculiarity of the Germans that has always pleased me. If a German is able to have a private art gallery, he builds it apart from his resi-

dence. On the walls of his dwelling you see no landscape paintings, no pictures of animals, no portraits of kings, warriors, philosophers, poets, and scientists. You see nothing there but the faces of those who belong to his own household, and of their ancestors for many generations. As he walks through his home and gazes upon those faces, a thousand blessed recollections are revived.

I have sometimes found a Bible which the owner had converted into a record of his spiritual life. I can show you the Bible of a Christian mother that has two or three thousand passages marked, to denote that they had been especially comforting and precious to her.

The most sacred treasure preserved by my father's family is my mother's Bible. In all the world there is nothing that stirs my emotional nature more profoundly than a look into the well-worn pages of that dear old book, which was the light and solace and strength of my mother's life.

Christian mother, set apart some copy of God's word to be known in the family as "mother's Bible," and when you read a passage of it which opens a fountain of comfort to your soul, mark it with your pencil or write something on the margin which in years to come will remind you, your children, and your children's children, how the Lord helped you as you meditated upon those sacred words.

Nothing is more beautiful to me than a home filled with mementos—a home in which almost every object is a reminder of some special manifestation of God's loving-kindness and tender mercy. Blessed is the child that is reared in such a home. The sons and daughters who go out from it will be the truest witnesses for Christ and the brightest ornaments to society.

Let us make our piety thoroughly practical. Let us transmute every religious sentiment into something useful to the world. If you wish to commemorate the goodness of God to you in answering your prayer for the recovery of your sick child, go out and bestow some substantial and lasting benefit upon the unfortunate child of some poor neighbor. Give crutches to some little cripple, or educate some widow's son or daughter, or send some young man, divinely called to the Christian ministry, to a theological seminary, or build a chapel for one of our foreign missions. Such a token of your grateful remembrance of divine favors to you would be more pleasing to God than a monument of stone or brass.

Let us begin this new year by looking back over the mercies of the years which preceded it, and by such a consecration of ourselves to the Lord's cause as will express our gratitude for his past favors.

If in the year that has just fled sorrow shadowed your home, do not think of it as a year of calamity.

We can never know the best things until we enter the shadows of sorrow. Remember that the Master said, "Blessed are they that mourn." There are blessings rich, deep, and satisfying which we never can know until we mourn. You would never see the stars if the sun continued to shine all through the twenty-four hours. The glare of human joy hides from our sight ten thousand blessings which we cannot see until our lives are darkened by some great grief. Some of the richest and most precious words of the Bible can be understood only when the soul is passing through some keen and lonely anguish.

The monuments which some of you have reared in yonder cemetery over the resting-places of your dead serve only to commemorate your troubles and to keep alive your grief. Oh, that you had the Christian faith to convert those monuments into memorials of God's wise and merciful discipline of your souls! Oh, that you could stand by them and fully realize the blessedness of the truth that, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth!"

The surest way to get rid of the anguish which comes from looking back is to turn our faces to the future, with the determination to be, more than we have ever been, helpers and healers of our suffering fellow-men. Look through love's eyes upon your neighbor's troubles, and in your eagerness to bless

him you will receive a blessing on your own soul that will lift it into a realm of peace and gladness. One of the noblest sentiments to be found in the world's literature was written by Kossuth, the great Hungarian patriot and martyr. He said: "If I had to choose my place among the forces of nature, do you know what I would choose to be? I would be the dew that falls silently and invisibly over the face of nature, trampled under foot and unconsidered, but perpetually blessing and refreshing all forms of life." In this losing of one's self in desire and effort for the good of others one finds the truest peace and the sweetest happiness which the human heart can know.

If I can live to make some pale face brighter, if I can give a second lustre to some tear-dimmed eye, if I can impart one throb of comfort to an aching heart, if in passing through the world I can cheer some way-worn soul, if I can lend a helping hand to the fallen, if I can discrown some wrong and diadem some right, my life will not have been in vain. The joy that is farthest from earth's alloy and nearest to the bliss of heaven is realized when conscience says, "You knew your duty to your fellow-man and you did it well."

III

GOD'S APPRECIATION OF HUMBLE SERVICE

"Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Mark 9 : 41.

To me everything that belongs to Christianity is precious, but there is no feature of it which I admire and love more than its sympathy with the weak and lowly. When Jesus Christ entered upon his mission he sought neither favor nor recognition from men of authority and influence. Herod sat in his golden palace at Tiberias in dissolute splendor, but of him he took no notice except to say to his disciples: "Go ye and tell that fox." He wanted Herod to understand that he neither courted his favor nor dreaded his frown. He despised him, not for the office he held, but for the corrupt life which he lived.

The Pharisees were the dominant religious party of Judea and were recognized as the religious aristocracy of their time. They swept through the

temple courts in their fringed robes with supreme haughtiness and with sovereign contempt for everybody who did not belong to their sect. For them Christ had no words but rebuke and reprobation. Their smiles and patronage he did not covet.

The dreaded emperor was all-powerful at Rome. To him Jesus sent no appeal; of him he sought no favor. He had no more regard for his influence than for that of the humblest subject of his empire. For worldly pride and display, for despotic power and cruelty, for extravagance and lust, he had nothing but frowns. But for suffering, weakness, and humble fidelity, he had infinite compassion and love.

To the haughty and self-sufficient he was wrathful as the storm, but to the feeble and lowly he was gentle as the summer's breeze.

He pitied and loved the sick and the poor. He loved children, he loved sinners, and of all sinners he loved most those who had suffered most and those who were divorced from human respect and sympathy.

True Christianity stretches out its hands, not to the mighty, but to the weak, and its victories have been won, not only without the help of the world's power, but in utter disregard of it.

Christianity and not philosophy has taught us the inherent dignity of man. Christianity and not philosophy has taught us to appreciate man for

those faculties which connect him with God and a boundless future.

He who did not blush to sit at the banquet of the publican, who shrank not from the white touch of the leper, and who felt no pollution from the harlot's tears, has done more to secure for man the respect, sympathy, and affection of his fellows than all other people combined.

From the life and teachings of Christ we learn the lesson that each man is as great as he is in God's sight and no greater. This thought is full of consolation to those who are obscure and who feel that their individuality is lost in the multitude.

God is no respecter of persons. Before him the world of mankind is but as the small dust of the balance. Is it anything to the ocean whether one foam speck upon its great bosom be larger or smaller than another? Gradations and eminences among creatures infinitesimal are not regarded by Him whose vision sweeps the infinite.

The chief of a nation dies and cities drape themselves in mourning; the great bells toll, requiems are sung, solemn processions march through the streets, and a thousand other things are done to signalize the fact that a great man has fallen; but to the great God, before whom his soul passes in all of its nakedness, he is of no more importance than the little waif who dies on the street unpitied and unnoticed. Let

us thank God that in his sight all are equally great and equally small.

When we die the few who love us may build us a humble monument and write upon it a brief epitaph. But in a few years the monument will decay, the inscription will be illegible, and we shall be forgotten. But let us not be unmindful of the counterpart to this sad truth. Within each one of us there dwells an immortal spirit which is akin to God and infinitely precious in his sight. To him this is neither common nor obscure.

God appreciates everything for the purposes for which he gave it existence. Every drop of rain has its mission. The shadow made by the tiniest insect's wing has its mission. For every human being upon this planet there is a divinely appointed mission, and in proportion to his fidelity to it he is worthy of approbation and honor. The only real and permanent greatness possible to us is in the line of duty and usefulness, and this is as open to every one of us as sunlight and air. When Jesus Christ says, "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name . . . shall not lose his reward," he teaches that God's eye is upon his humblest servant, that he accepts the most inconspicuous service, if inspired by benevolent motives, and that he will as truly reward the little gift of the pauper as the great gift of the millionaire.

The same lesson is embodied in the parable of the talents. That parable teaches us that God values us, not for the magnitude and splendor of the gifts which he has bestowed upon us, but for the fidelity with which we use them. It teaches us that, however small our talents and however meagre our opportunities, if we faithfully use them our reward shall be infinite.

To the man who had wisely employed the two talents he gave the same plaudit which he bestowed upon him who had rightly used the five talents: "Well done, good and faithful servant." He received the same honor and was bidden to enter the same joy. The same reward would have been bestowed upon the man who had received one talent if he had been as true and loyal as those to whom greater gifts were given.

My friends, every man among you has a divinely bestowed talent, and by the wise and faithful use of it he can honor God, bless his fellow-men, and win for himself a joyous welcome to the skies.

In the light of this truth every one should aspire to usefulness here and blessedness hereafter. O ye humble, feeble, hidden, unrecognized ones, look up and bless God that there are eyes above you that do see the light that is in you, and that your gift, though it be but the widow's mite or a cup of water, is registered in heaven.

To-night, if you will lift your eyes to the sky, you will see some stars pre-eminent for their magnitude, while others in the far-off milky way are almost lost to vision. But though "one star differeth from another star in glory," all are of the same pure essence, all are the offspring of the same eternal sire.

So it is in the kingdom of grace. There we behold towering men, kingly men, men upon whom God has lavished his richest gifts, men who shine with dazzling effulgence; and there we behold obscure men, men endowed with but one talent, and whose light is as dim as that of the scarcely discernible star. But they are children of the same father and servants of the same master. Their lights were kindled at the same fountain of glory. Each is fulfilling the mission to which he was called, and in the end they shall receive the same rapturous plaudit and be crowned with the same imperishable honor.

I thank God when a rich man is truly converted and brought into the church. Houses of worship cannot be built without money. Colleges for the education of our children cannot be established without money. The preaching of the gospel cannot be sustained without money. Missionaries cannot be sent to China, Africa, Italy, and Mexico without money. Homes for the aged, retreats for

the sick, and asylums for the poor cannot be erected without money.

I praise God when he puts his grace into the heart of a rich man and makes him a true disciple of Christ, because that man, inspired by the love of God and humanity, may enlarge and multiply the agencies for the extension of Christ's kingdom and the redemption of the world.

But let me assure you that poverty is as truly a talent as wealth. Some are called to be rich and others are called to be poor. In respect to the acquisition of worldly possessions, "there is a divinity which shapes our ends."

There are two kinds of poverty. One is envious and idle. It sits down in dirt and wretchedness, bemoans its hard fate, and curses the man of enterprise and thrift. Such a poverty deserves neither sympathy nor respect. The other kind is manly, noble, and helpful. Having little besides daily bread, it possesses also the virtue of contentment, which makes happy the humblest lot.

If any have come up to this house from homes of poverty, if any who have recently put on Christ in baptism and been admitted to fellowship in this body of Christians are struggling with the inconveniences of penury, I would say to them that there is no disgrace in honest poverty and that they can make it a beautiful and happy lot.

There are some men and women in this world whose estimates of other people are not only unjust, but disgustingly vulgar. They look with contempt upon self-denial, whatever be the motive behind it. They sneer at the scant table and the threadbare garb of the honest laborer, forgetting that such a man may be rich in every element of a noble life; forgetting that our divine Lord placed on the pinnacle of human greatness one whose raiment was coarse camel's hair and whose meat was locusts and wild honey; forgetting that some of the greatest of the apostles were poor fishermen of the Galilean lake, and that their divine Lord and master was so poor that he had not where to lay his head. I would rather have the virtues of such men than the wealth of "Twenty seas, whose shores were pearl, whose waters were crystal, and whose rocks were gold."

Poverty is no barrier to usefulness. The lips of contemptuous Pharisees might curl when the poor widow dropped her two mites into the temple treasury, but in the eyes of Him who sees the hearts of men that poor widow gave more than all the Pharisees.

The poverty of Luther did not disqualify him for fighting and winning the battles of the Reformation and for establishing principles of truth and righteousness that shall live forever.

Those whose intellectual gifts are meagre and feeble, and who realize their incompetence for great and conspicuous undertakings, I would exhort to work on without discouragement and without one thought of the inconspicuous character of their service. Fidelity is better than greatness and fame.

Do your best, assured that God would not love you more if you had the genius of a Milton or a Newton. Work with the same manly self-respect that you would have if you knew that senates were listening to your words and empires were being molded by your counsels. Work hopefully and confidently, knowing that God approves and angels applaud, and that when your task is done the gates of glory will open to receive you. The secret of success and happiness in this life is to be just where God would have you and to do just the work which God has committed to your hands. Before him,

> Honor and fame from no condition rise;
> Act well your part; there all the honor lies.

There is a Christian ceremony which signifies that those who submit to it have merged their wills into the will of God, their thoughts into the thought of God, and their lives into the life of God. This is what is meant by being "buried with Christ in baptism." The man who has thus identified himself with the limitless resources of the Infinite cannot

fail to be good and great. The possibilities of such a man's life cannot be measured by any human mind, and neither the highest art nor the highest eloquence can depict the glory of the immortality to which he is destined.

IV

THE CHURCH BUILT ON PETER

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. 16 : 18, 19.

At the time Jesus spoke these words Peter had a clearer conception of his character and mission than any other disciple. The common idea among the Jews was that the Messiah would be simply a divinely commissioned man, under whose leadership they would regain their former power and prosperity. Some of the apostles, while they believed Jesus to be the Messiah, did not exalt him much above the Messianic conception of the average Jew.

When Christ put to the disciples the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter, remembering all that he had heard him say, and all the wonderful things that he had seen him do, and illumined and uplifted by the divine influence which at that moment radiated from the person of the speaker,

promptly and fervently replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

It was this exhibition of superior intelligence, zeal, and courage in Peter that drew from the lips of the Master the words of our text: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

Paul says, we "are built on the foundation of the apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." In the visible organization of his kingdom in the world Christ began with Peter. He had two reasons for beginning with him. Peter was the first disciple to declare the true conception of his Messianic character, and more than any other disciple he possessed those qualities which were needed to advance the triumphs of his gospel.

I think that Jesus meant to say about this: "Peter, you are the first of my followers to distinctly comprehend and announce my true character and mission, and you, more than any other man, have developed those traits of character which are to distinguish my subjects from the subjects of Satan. For these reasons, in building my church, I will begin with you. I am the foundation and you are the first stone that I will lay upon it. By giving you the first place, I will let the world know what sort

of material is needed for this sacred edifice. I will give unto you the keys of my kingdom. When I have left the world, you shall be the first to declare to guilty men the terms of salvation. I will endorse your proclamations of my truth. As you will speak for me, and by the direction of my Spirit, those who accept your words shall be admitted into my kingdom, and those who reject them shall be excluded."

There is not a fragment of Scripture which supports the idea that Peter had more authority than the other apostles. There is not a word in the New Testament that warrants us in believing that Peter was the head of the church, and that the other apostles and disciples were subordinates who obeyed him. That doctrine is the invention of priestcraft.

Against the church "the gates of hell shall not prevail." The word hell in this passage is a translation of the Greek word "hades," and means the grave, or the unseen world. The gates of the grave shall not prevail against the church. That means that the church shall never be annihilated by the death of Christian believers. There shall never come a time when Christians cannot be found on the earth. There shall never come a time when there will not be organizations of human beings who will believe just what Peter believed concerning Christ, and who will be like him in character and conduct.

In our interpretations of this passage we may be far apart at many points, but all of us believe that Jesus meant to confer a special distinction upon Peter, and to present him to the world as a man of exceptionally great virtues.

I wish you to consider with me those elements of Peter's character which rendered him worthy of the honor bestowed upon him by his divine Master. He was not a perfect man. He had weaknesses, and some of them were very conspicuous and offensive. But notwithstanding his infirmities he possessed certain virtues in a degree which rendered him pre-eminently noble. What were those virtues?

1. One was his freedom from cunning duplicity. He was as transparent as the day. He attempted no concealment of his feelings and purposes. He meant what he said and said what he thought and felt. If he loved a man he would let him see it at once. If he disliked him, there was no delay or indirection in making him sensible of the fact. His loves and animosities, joys and griefs, hopes and fears, always came to the surface.

He was not a politician. He got office, but did not seek it. It sought him. In this respect he was very unlike James and John, who counseled with their ambitious mother, and then sent her secretly to ask the Master to give them the two highest offices in his Messianic kingdom.

Contrast this simple-hearted, undesigning, uncalculating, straightforward man with the modern political office-seeker. Contrast his transparent methods with those of the average politician who covets an office in the gift of the Legislature. I have observed that when a man has determined to be a candidate before that honorable body, he does not immediately announce his purpose, but hides it for a season in the solitude of his own innocent breast. He first goes out on a campaign of disinterested patriotism, to educate the people into sympathy with his views on certain political measures. Just what his views are depends very largely upon the political complexion of the locality where he rises to speak. If he strikes a community that is about evenly divided on the silver question, he can straddle that issue and make his auditors believe that the only salvation for the country is in tariff reform. If he goes into a manufacturing district where there is a strong protection sentiment, he can be grandly eloquent in declaiming against the robberies of the "Gold Bugs," and produce the impression that all our country's woes are traceable to the demonetization of silver. If he visits a community where the feeling is bitter against corporations, his slogan is, "Let us have a railroad commission." If he enters one where the railroads are in favor with the people, he passes over the

commission question and pours out a torrent of invective upon the federal administration, because it refuses to recognize the belligerent rights of the struggling and long-suffering Cubans.

He performs all this patriotic work at his own expense and at an enormous sacrifice of his private interests. A few days before the assembling of the Legislature he writes a letter to each member of that patriotic body, telling him of the great work that he has done, of the self-denials he has practised for the good of the country, and begging his support for a certain office, that he may continue to make an oblation of himself.

If by such means, or any other device, he secures the place which he covets, he is profoundly surprised. He declares that it was an honor he did not seek, and that he accepts it, not to gratify any ambition of his own, but to please his friends and to strengthen the cause of his oppressed and bleeding country.

In these latter days such frankness and sincerity as were illustrated by the Apostle Peter are looked upon as weaknesses. Inscrutability is the ideal virtue in modern politics. To conceal your real purpose and reach the prize you covet by indirection and circumlocution is the favorite wisdom. To be open and ingenuous is foolish. Look wise and say but little; wrap yourself in a veil of mystery; in

the presence of a newspaper reporter be as silent as a mummy and as frigid as an iceberg, and you will be credited with more than Solomonic wisdom and greatness.

A man who is disposed to be very frank in everything may sometimes go too far and do wrong. Peter was wrong when he said to the Master, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But when he was rebuked for it and saw his mistake, with the deepest humility and penitence he exclaimed, "Not my feet only, but my head and my hands." He was wrong when he ventured to rebuke Jesus for saying that he must go up to Jerusalem and be put to death. But with all of his indiscreetness and rashness Christ preferred him to other men, who though more cautious and prudent than he, were less candid and transparent. He wanted for his most conspicuous standard-bearer a man whose motives were always visible, and who could always be relied upon to say just what he believed and felt.

2. Another virtue which endeared Peter to our Lord, and rendered him worthy of the honor bestowed upon him, was illustrated by the promptness with which he obeyed every conviction and seized every opportunity to serve the cause of truth and righteousness. He lost no time in protracted deliberation over anything. He thought rapidly and reached his conclusions quickly.

When the apostles were questioned about any matter he was always the first to answer. When Jesus said to them, "Will ye also go away?" Peter instantly responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." On another occasion, when the Master said, "Whom say ye that I am?" the same disciple promptly replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." When he and John ran to the sepulchre, John paused before the open door to consider the propriety of entering. He shuddered at the thought of doing anything that had the appearance of presumption or irreverence. But Peter debated that question while he was running. When he reached the grave his mind was made up. Without a tremor or the slightest hesitation, he stepped down into the hallowed place to see if his beloved Lord had risen from the dead. When messengers came to him from Joppa, requesting him to go to that city and comfort those who had been plunged into sorrow by the death of Dorcas, he arose at once and returned with the messengers. With the same promptness he responded to the summons of Cornelius.

Peter's disposition to act quickly sometimes led him into serious mistakes. When the mob went into the garden to arrest the Master, the first impulse of this apostle was to defend him and resent the indignity, and without taking time to confer

with any one or to forecast the consequences of the act, he drew his sword and severed a man's ear from his head. This was a very grave mistake, and he was severely rebuked for it. But notwithstanding the haste of his temper, which rendered him liable to commit such hurtful blunders, he had the qualities of a great leader, and in the judgment of our Lord he was better suited than any other disciple to guide the little sacramental band in pioneering the cause of his gospel and kingdom.

It is very easy to criticise Peter and to deplore his lack of deliberation and prudence; but it is an undeniable fact that only men of his type have made any great and enduring contribution to the world's advancement.

John the Baptist was a man of the same temperament. If he had been what the modern world calls "a prudent man," he would not have branded the high-church aristocracy of Judea as "a generation of vipers." If he had been what we are wont to call "a discreet man," he would not have rebuked the royal Herod for his unlawful marriage. His lack of modern tact, shrewdness, and caution exposed him to many troubles and finally cost him his life.

If John the Baptist were on the earth to-day there are many churches that would not admit him to their pulpits. They would be afraid to turn him

loose on the Pharisees and Sadducees of the nineteenth century. Such a deliverance as he would make on the extravagances, sins, and hypocrisies of modern social life could not fail to disturb the sensibilities of many a pew-renter, and sadly diminish the revenues of the congregation with which he worships. But without the very qualities which made him so offensive to the Pharisees of his time and which provoked the wrath of Herod and his household, he could not have accomplished the work that God commissioned him to perform.

Who doubts that if John the Baptist should come out of his grave to-day, and preach one such sermon in Nashville as he was wont to preach along the banks of the Jordan, it would do more to renovate our social life and to promote true repentance toward God than all that will ever be said by that class of ministers who are too gentle, tender, and politic, to denounce any exhibition of fashionable vice and folly.

If Martin Luther had waited to take counsel of the wise men of his day, or until he could proceed without peril to himself and his sympathizers, he would have wrought no reformation. He was a minute man. He waited for nothing but God. It was the celerity as well as the boldness of his movements that startled the world and secured for him the backing which made him victorious.

What was the most conspicuous quality of the men who followed George Washington in the battles of the Revolution, and who won for American soldiery immortal fame? It was promptitude. They did not wait to see how the tide of war would turn, or until they should be forced into service by conscript laws. They were patriots and heroes, who answered to the first bugle blast, hastened to the front, and felt the first shock of battle.

Men and brethren, in the honor which Christ conferred upon the hasty-tempered Peter we see God's profound appreciation of the virtue of promptitude. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Whatsover your hands find to do, you should do at once and with all your might. I say to you who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but have never confessed him in baptism, that in God's righteous judgment your delay is not only unwarranted but unmanly and ignoble. I say to church-members who have never gone down into the smoke and flame of a single battle for the Lord's cause that Jesus Christ has no honors for the mere Sunday morning dress-parade soldier. "No labor, no reward; no cross, no crown," is a law of his kingdom that shall stand forever.

3. Another reason that Christ had for conferring such distinction upon Peter was that he was as brave as he was frank and prompt. He dared to do

his duty in the face of difficulties and dangers. I anticipate a criticism upon this assertion. You will say, "How do you reconcile your statement with Peter's denial of Christ?" It is a sufficient answer to your objection to say that a brave man is not absolutely fearless. The most courageous man may sometimes be smitten with fear. He may even run from danger. There is not a battle-scarred soldier among you who will not bear witness to the truth of this statement. Some of us have seen the heroes of a hundred bloody conflicts retreat in disorder and with dismay when pressed by overwhelming numbers.

Peter was panic-stricken in the presence of the howling mob that gathered around the judgment hall. Overcome by the peril of his situation, he denied his Lord and Master. I am not his apologist. I do not excuse him. I condemn him. But justice and truth require us to admit that it was the only occasion in his long and eventful Christian career where fear kept him from doing his duty. Let it be admitted also that he was not the only apostle who was panic-stricken in that awful crisis. When Jesus was arrested, all of them, save Peter and John, forsook him and fled. These two men followed him back into the city and even into the judgment hall. There it was that Peter denied him. I am almost sure that John too would have denied him if he had been questioned as Peter was.

When we place before us the whole history of Peter, we must admit that he was a man of extraordinary courage. Look at him as he stands before the council after he has enraged the Jews by charging them with the murder of Christ. He stands there and speaks the truth in utter defiance of that august tribunal and the howling populace which surrounds it. When he is told that he must not again speak in the name of the Lord Jesus, he looks calmly into the faces of the judges and replies: "Whether it be right, in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Surely that was not the conduct of a coward. The man who will speak the truth where it is despised, and when he knows that his fidelity will be punished not only with social and religious ostracism, but with bonds, imprisonment, and stripes, is not a coward.

Peter's courage sometimes degenerated into rashness; but notwithstanding this weakness, Christ honored him more than any other disciple. Jesus knew that he was a hero, and that he would carry his crimson banner into the darkness and fury of any conflict By putting this heroic apostle in the most conspicuous position, by elevating him to the highest pinnacle of distinction, Jesus knew that he

would emphasize and magnify, throughout all generations, the importance of Christian courage.

Brethren, that quality is just as essential to Christian integrity and success in these latter days as it was in Peter's time. Our power to touch human hearts, to transform human lives, and to cleanse the moral atmosphere about us of its foul pollutions, is in proportion to the courage which we exhibit in speaking and acting the truth in the presence of opposition and danger.

Courage ! courage ! Oh, for more of that virtue which made the most conspicuous element in the character of the greatest apostle ! I would rather have the power which that virtue imparts to the human soul than to wield the sceptre of earth's proudest monarch.

Here, then, are the three qualities which in combination made Peter the ideal Christian and the ideal preacher—sincerity, promptitude, and courage.

When Jesus Christ said that he would build his church on Peter, and that the gates of the grave should never prevail against it, he meant that in every subsequent age there would be Christians in the world as honest and prompt and brave as Peter. Look over the long roll of the Christian martyrs, and you will find that, up to the present date, this prophecy has been fulfilled.

Paul was such a Christian. His dying testimony

to his own fidelity was: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith."

Polycarp was such a Christian. As he stood upon his funeral pile, and the flames were kindling about his naked feet, he was exhorted to save his life by denying Christ. His reply was: "I can never deny him who was too brave and too noble to save himself by denying me."

Chrysostom was such a Christian. When threatened with exile, he stood in his pulpit and anathematized the licentiousness of the clergy and the wicked despotism of the crown.

John Bunyan was such a Christian. Twelve years of confinement in Bedford jail did not cure him of his determination "to preach the gospel without the license of the king."

Carey, the pioneer of modern missions, and Judson, his dauntless and long-suffering co-laborer in the same sacred cause, and Charles Spurgeon, who could neither be flattered off nor frightened off from the straight line of gospel integrity, were such Christians.

Heroes as dauntless as they may be found even in this wicked generation. "Till time's last thunder shakes the world," God will have brave and faithful witnesses among men. The perpetuity of this type of men insures the perpetuity of the

church. The church stands to-day towering in strength and grandeur above the wreck and ruin of ten thousand opposing institutions. It will live and flourish under the smile and guidance of its divine Founder, when all who now malign and smite it lie buried in their graves, epitaphed with the reprobation of the world.

Happy Zion ! What a favored lot is thine.

V

FINAL REWARD

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matt. 25 : 21.

"Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 25 : 30.

In this chapter there are three parables, but they illustrate the same subject. They set forth the principle or law which will regulate the judgment of the great day. In that day those who have served God wisely and faithfully shall be rewarded with honor and happiness, but those who have been slothful, wicked, and unprofitable shall be condemned and punished. Against that law no human conscience will rebel. The principle embodied in the parable of the talents is universally accepted.

What is it that is rewarded here? It is industry and faithfulness—an honest effort to make the most of life. "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold I have gained beside them five talents more."

This servant had been thoughtful, active, and frugal. In every respect he had been true and loyal. He had used his master's money so wisely and faithfully that he was able to return twice the amount which he had received. The master, recognizing and appreciating his fidelity, said: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

He that had received the one talent came and said, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth." To him the master replied: ' 'Thou wicked and slothful servant. . . Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. . . And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

More than eighteen and a half centuries have passed since that parable was first spoken, but during this long period not one human being has ever questioned the wisdom or justice of that master who commended and rewarded his faithful servant, but

condemned and punished the one who was wicked and slothful.

"Well done, good and faithful servant." It is faithfulness and not success that is here rewarded. If the servant to whom the five talents were given had come to his lord and said, "I have labored long and diligently, but have acccomplished nothing," the master would have replied, "Well done, my servant; it was not success that I required of thee, but fidelity. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

This parable is a miniature picture of the final judgment. In it is set forth the principle which will determine the character and destiny of every human being at that august tribunal.

In that day men shall be rewarded not for success, but for faithfulness.

Let us not misuse this comforting truth. While it is true that it is not success but fidelity that God will reward, it is also true that faithful service in God's kingdom is never unproductive.

A man may try to be a mechanic and fail. If he has no aptitude for mechanical work, he is sure to fail. I know a poor fellow who has been trying for thirty years to make a physician of himself and has not yet succeeded. Sad, seedy, and forlorn, he sits at his office window, looks out upon the world, and bewails not only his hard fate, but the folly of those

who refuse to confide in his medical skill. There are contributors to the poetical columns of our city newspapers who will get neither money nor fame for their labor. There are some dear women who sit up all night to write odes to posterity which posterity will never see. That a man may make an honest effort to be a statesman and fail is a proposition which no one will deny who has studied the history of the Tennessee Legislature.

I am sure that no man ever honestly tried to be a Christian and failed. "Ask, and ye shall receive: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

There is not the possibility of failure in this direction. Any man who wants the great salvation revealed in the gospel of Christ can have it if he will humbly and honestly seek it. Cast yourself as a suppliant at the feet of him who pitied publicans and harlots and opened the gate of paradise to the penitent thief, and it shall be instantly written in heaven, "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven."

No Christian ever failed in a scriptural effort to grow in spiritual strength and usefulness. You cannot go into a gymnasium and systematically exercise your limbs for twelve months without increasing your physical strength and activity. Neither can

you systematically labor in God's vineyard without promoting your spiritual vitality and power.

Fidelity in any department of Christian work succeeds. These Christian women who consecrate themselves to the service of the poor, the sick, and the helpless, do not labor in vain? The Christian men and women who strive to be useful in Sunday-school and mission work, do not fail? They may accomplish much less than they desire and hope to accomplish, but their divine Master has decreed that their labor shall not be unfruitful.

Working for God is never an experiment. It is not casting seed on unproductive soil. In God's kingdom no effort at usefulness is lost. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians: "My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

The faithful servants in this parable were justly treated. Who can doubt that our heavenly Master is just in bestowing eternal honor and happiness upon those who devote their lives to his service?

But look at the treatment received by the unprofitable servant who hid his master's money in the earth. He was branded as unprofitable and cast into outer darkness because he had made no use of his master's money. His punishment was as just as the reward bestowed upon the faithful servant.

The excuse which he made for his idleness was that he had received only one talent, and that with so small a capital he was unable to do anything in the great world of trade. In reply to this fallacious defense the master said, "Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers." He meant that if the servant felt that he was incompetent to trade successfully with the small amount of money which he had received, he should have taken it to a banking institution, where it could have been consolidated with other funds and loaned for a good per cent. He was perfectly competent to do that much, and having failed to do it he was condemned and punished.

God does not condemn any man for having failed to do what he had not the capacity to accomplish. His wrath falls only upon those who stubbornly refuse to make any wise use of their talents and opportunities.

To all his people, in all ages, Christ said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." There are some Christians who have neither the capacity nor the opportunity to do the work of a foreign missionary, and yet they are not exempt from responsibility in this great enterprise. What you cannot do in person, you can do through others. You can put your money to the exchangers. You can place your talent with some organized body

of Christians who will use it in sending the gospel into "the regions beyond."

The money that I am able to give would not support a missionary, but that does not relieve me of responsibility. What I cannot do alone, I can do by acting in concert with others. I can put my little talent to the exchangers. I can drop it into the treasury of some missionary body, where it will be added to a thousand other contributions and used for the furtherance of the Lord's cause.

There are persons in this church who will not give anything to its support on the ground that their poverty prevents them from making such a contribution as would be creditable to them and helpful to the church. They imagine that this relieves them of all obligation to give. They deceive themselves. The poor man's gift alone would not support the church, but added to a hundred other gifts it would support it.

It is not what one man alone is able to do that makes his responsibility, but what he can do in combination with a thousand other men. In associate effort each man's labor, whether great or small, becomes important and effective.

I cannot go out here and single handed overthrow these dirty dens of iniquity which are the fruitful sources of vice and crime. If I could, they should not live another day. But this does not relieve me

from all responsibility for their existence. What I cannot do alone, I may accomplish in combination with the thousands of virtuous men and women of this city who are ready to join me in a crusade against any social evil.

We find in this parable the same law of judgment contained in each of the other two parables of the same chapter.

The unprofitable servant is cast into "outer darkness" because he failed to make use of his talent. He had doubtless done many wicked things, but here mention is made only of the wickedness of his idleness.

Why were the "foolish virgins" shut out from the marriage supper? This punishment was not inflicted upon them because they had done certain evil things, but because they had neglected an important duty. "They took no oil with their lamps."

Jesus Christ points us to the final application of this law in another parable, where the righteous and the wicked are divided, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

For what were they thus punished? Not for wicked deeds which they had performed, but simply for their neglect of duty. "I was a hungered and

and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

A few years ago I spent a day in hunting with the Nimrod of the Virginia mountains. We had not gone far into the forest when he dismounted and, seizing one of the most quiet and seemingly inoffensive dogs I ever saw, slipped a rope over his neck, suspended him from the limb of a tree, and left him there to die. As we rode away from the tragic scene, I asked him for an explanation of his conduct. His reply was, "Anything as worthless as that dog has no right to live." For the very same reason our Lord and Master pronounced his curse upon the fruitless fig tree. God's immutable law is, that whatsoever is unprofitable must perish.

Who questions the right of a merchant to discharge a lazy and worthless clerk? Who questions the right of the State to dismiss from its service an official who habitually neglects the duties of his position?

If the chief executive of our republic should leave the seat of government and wander over the country to the utter neglect of the affairs of his great office, public sentiment everywhere would demand his impeachment.

While this principle is recognized and enforced

by all human government, there are people in every community who cling to the delusion that it is left out of God's administration. They admit that justice and the welfare of the universe demand the punishment of every positive and willful violation of divine law. They do not doubt that God's righteous indignation will be inflicted upon liars, swindlers, drunkards, adulterers, thieves, and murderers. They concede that such characters deserve to be cast into "outer darkness," but they indulge the vain hope that the spiritual idler—the man who has simply failed to be useful—will escape the retribution of the wicked.

How incompatible is this thought with God's revealed will! How can men cherish it and believe in the words of God's Christ? It is a contradiction not only of the Bible, but of their own God-given instincts. Idleness is wickedness, and God says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

My friend, what are you? Are you a faithful servant or an idler? You may be the busiest of men in secular pursuits; you may be a merchant burdened with all the cares and complications of an extensive trade, or you may be a lawyer engaged in the most extensive practice; but if your secular vocation is divorced from religion and you are doing nothing to advance God's kingdom of truth and

righteousness, you are an idler, an unprofitable servant whose reward will be an eternal heritage of shame and anguish.

Where art thou? Where do you stand with reference to God's Messiah? Have you received him as your Saviour, and bowed to him as your Master? Can you look up into his face to-day and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?"

Where art thou? Are you still in the kingdom of Satan, still impenitent, unregenerate, without God, and without hope? If so, you are an unprofitable servant, whose end is destruction.

"Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." What is meant by these figures of speech I will not attempt to explain. Outer darkness, the smoke of torment, the undying worm, and the fire that is never quenched, are horrors which my imagination is too feeble to depict.

We know that one element of the perdition of ungodly men is remorse. Every one of us has felt the sting of a guilty conscience. Last night as you walked out on the thoroughfare and watched a long procession of human beings go by, you saw the face of one whom you supposed to be dead, and instantly the brightness went out of your life. The pavement beneath you seemed to sink, and everything

above you threatened to fall upon your defenseless head, as the old sin, committed years ago, stood before you, and the voice of your guilty conscience whispered, "Son, remember! remember!" That was only a touch of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is never quenched.

VI

TRUE FRIENDSHIP AND ITS COUNTERFEITS[1]

"I have called you friends." John 15 : 15.

The First Baptist Church of Nashville welcomes this morning to her sanctuary a large company of visitors from the State of Alabama. I am happy to be the medium through which this welcome is extended, because I first saw the light of day on the soil of that commonwealth, and because in this gathering of her sons and daughters are many friends who stood by me in the earlier years of my ministry, cheered and strengthened me in my efforts to overcome the wrong and establish the right.

I think it will be profitable to us, in view of the peculiar circumstances which have brought us together this morning, to consider the basis of true friendship, the functions of it, and the value of it.

Friendship is independent of blood. I do not have to consult the history of my progenitors, and

[1] Delivered before the Alabama refugees from yellow fever, October 3, 1897.

look through the various branches of my family tree, to find out whether a certain man is my friend, and whether I am under any obligation to be his friend. Blood is a tie, and in some instances a very strong one, but friendship is something higher, finer, and more divine than the tie of blood.

Friendship is not familiar acquaintance. I may spend half of my life in the company of a man, live in the same house with him, travel with him, and participate with him in a thousand pleasures without approximating the feeling or state which we call friendship. "Let me introduce you to my friend," is a conventional expression which in ninety-nine cases in a hundred contains a falsehood. You call thousands of men friends only because you see them often and your relations with them are agreeable and pleasant.

There may be the truest friendship where there is but little personal acquaintance and intercourse. We are reluctant to come close to some people whom we sincerely love, and for whom we would sacrifice property, comfort, and peace, and even imperil our lives. The fact that we keep away from them, make no demands upon them, and secretly promote their interests, is the best proof of the genuineness of our friendship.

Let me recall a very pleasing incident of my own history, which illustrates the truth that familiar

acquaintance and personal intercourse are not essential to true friendship. About thirty-four years ago I stood before a great assemblage of people in the city of Montgomery, pleading for a great cause. At the conclusion of my sermon a distinguished public man, occupying the highest place in the gift of the people of his State, a man to whom I had never been introduced and whose face I had seldom seen, approached me quietly and modestly, laid his hand upon my shoulder, and said, "God bless you, young man!" With a tropical suddenness, the impulses excited in that moment budded and blossomed into an undying friendship.

Between that occasion and his death we had only a few brief conversations. Our homes were not far apart, and for nearly four years I was his pastor, but we were never intimate. Only two or three times did we exchange visits, and yet for more than thirty years we were as loyal to each other as David and Jonathan. Each was on guard for the other, and each eagerly and gladly seized upon every opportunity to advance the other in his chosen vocation. His tongue is silent, his great heart beats no more; but the memory of his sweet friendship lingers with me like a dream of heaven.

Friendship is not sympathy for one of the same age, nor for one of the same tastes and habits, nor for one pursuing the same vocation.

I have seen the young ivy cling tremblingly but tenaciously to the gnarled oak. I have seen the tender honeysuckle come and kiss the gray buttresses and twine itself around the cold stone of a massive Corinthian column. So too I have seen the frail and timid child cling to a stalwart and rugged man, whose face was like the frowning front of Mars. I have seen men hoary with age and stored with wisdom turning away from their peers to seek companions and friends among children that were as playful as lambs and as gay as butterflies.

Friendship is not agreement in political and religious views. There are thousands of men standing close to me around the same political banner, and marching with me in the same religious procession, for whom I have about as much affinity as water has for oil.

Friendship is compatible with the widest divergences of opinions, both in politics and religion. Every honest Democrat believes that there are thousands of honest Republicans, and every honest Republican believes that there are thousands of honest Democrats, and where men are mutually honest they can be to each other the best of friends.

There are Alabamians before me to-day who well remember when William L. Yancey and Henry W. Hilliard were central and colossal figures in Alabama politics. The former was a Demosthenes in the

cause of Democracy, while the latter was a Cicero in the ranks of Whiggery. A hundred times they faced each other in the forum of public debate. It was a battle of giants. Roman gladiators never fought with more courage and determination. But these men, who stood so far apart in politics, and who inflicted such herculean blows upon each other in political warfare, were personal friends. Each believed the other to be honest, pure, patriotic, and brave. Where men have such confidence in each other there is no barrier to friendship.

God pity the man whose friendships are limited either by his political affiliations or his religious belief.

What, then, is friendship? It is the intermarriage of two human souls that are inspired by mutual respect, confidence, and love, and by a desire and purpose to live for each other's welfare.

Some theological writer has spoken of friendship as a development of the principle of the incarnation. God became man that he might save and exalt man, and enrich him with all the blessings which the Infinite can bestow upon the finite. God became man because he loved man, and because, by taking man's nature into fellowship with his own, he could more fully manifest and communicate to him his infinite love.

I see no objection to this doctrine. In the light

of it we can see more clearly the meaning of friendship, the sacredness of it, and the magnitude of the purposes to be accomplished by it.

The love of God for us, revealed in the incarnation, is an incomprehensible mystery. The angels desire to look into it, but it is as impenetrable to them as it is to us. What did God see in us to love? What did he behold in us to love so well that he was willing to take upon himself human flesh, and in human flesh suffer and die for us? What have we in common with him, that he should desire our friendship and companionship? These are problems which baffle all human philosophy.

But while we can never understand this mystery, we know that nothing is more real than the God-man's love for us, and that nothing is more real than the friendship which exists between him and those who trust and obey him.

Was he not a friend to Lazarus, Martha, and Mary—that little family at Bethany, beneath whose roof he so often slept? Were they not friends to him? Were they not a refuge from care, and a solace to his troubled spirit?

The same intimate, tender, and sacred relation existed between him and his apostles. Mutual confidence and affection had brought them so close to him that he was constrained to say: "Henceforth I call you not servants: for the servant knoweth

not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

In the light of our Lord's teaching and example let us consider what a friend is expected to do.

1. A friend is expected to give advice. You are not bound to accept it, and he has no right to be offended if you do not accept it. You should never part with the freedom of your own judgment and will. To be bound absolutely by the judgment of your friend lays on him unlawful responsibility, and takes from you the conduct of your own affairs.

Even if you do not take your friend's advice, you may be helped by it. Only to know that another thinks about our difficulties is helpful.

Jesus was the only infallible counsellor. His infinite wisdom and holiness rendered it impossible for him to mislead a friend. The wisest and best man in the world is liable to misguide those who come to him for counsel. But this fact does not relieve any man of the obligation to advise his friends when serious difficulties arise in their pathway. To counsel a fellow-man in some real emergency of his life is to assume a painful responsibility, but he who refuses to take that responsibility is not a friend.

2. The man who claims to be your friend is expected to be your defender when you need to be shielded from wrong.

When the Pharisees dragged an adulterous woman into the presence of our Lord and insisted that she should be stoned to death according to the law of Moses, he instantly threw himself between her and her pursuers, and administered to them a rebuke so withering that they dropped their heads and went away from him.

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." That was a home thrust, because there was not one of them who had not been guilty of the very crime for which they would condemn and punish this defenseless woman.

Christ did not excuse her, nor did he apologize to the Pharisees for her shameful conduct, and yet he was her friend. Her helpless condition appealed to the sympathy and nobleness of his great nature, and he promptly responded by putting his own manly breast between her and death.

Such is the degeneracy of our times that thousands of men will not defend even the innocent women of their own household. In this respect the age of knight errantry was incomparably better than our own, for then every boy, when he reached the age of twelve years, was led to an altar where he took a solemn oath to defend, even unto death, the person and name of every deserving woman in the circle of his acquaintance.

In our day it is not uncommon to find boys and

men who are too pusillanimous to extend such protection to the women of their own homes. Of all the criminals in this wicked world, the defamer of women is the meanest; and of all the cowards that are permitted to live, the most contemptible is he who shrinks from defending an innocent woman against the assaults of a villainous traducer.

To defend your name and reputation is what you expect of every man who claims to be your friend.

A few summers ago, in a watering place in the mountains of old Virginia, a company of guests were engaged in discussing some of Virginia's public men. One of them, in the heat of debate, made an unwarranted assault upon the name of Fitzhugh Lee. Instantly another man rose to his feet, and said: "Sir, Fitzhugh Lee is present in the person of his friend. If he were here in his own person, he would resent your malicious falsehood; in his absence, I will do for him what he would surely do if present." The result was a prompt retraction of the false accusation and a humble apology.

If such courage and fidelity were common—in other words, if men everywhere were loyal to the obligations of true friendship—the cowardly defamers of the pure and the good would have but few opportunities for moral assassination.

Christ said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

When he spoke these words, he knew that his purpose was to lay down his own life for those upon whom he had bestowed his love. That purpose he fulfilled.

"He died for us." "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; and by his stripes we are healed." The sacrifice he made for his friends rises to an inconceivable height of sublimity above any human sacrifice, because there was in it not only the physical pangs of death, but all the righteous wrath of an infinitely holy God against the sins of the world.

The example of Christ in making such a sacrifice for our redemption shows us what true friendship will inspire us to do for those we love when their interests and lives are imperiled.

3. It is expected that the man who professes to be your friend will show his appreciation of your good qualities and good deeds. Appreciation does not express itself in conventional flattery and exaggerated applause. It is simply a fair and candid recognition of your real merits. Such appreciation of you will impart new vitality to your faculties and inspire you with increased heroism in all your virtuous undertakings.

What some persons need more than anything else for their development is a candid and just expression of appreciation from their friends. They

need the sort of recognition and encouragement that will make them realize their actual worth and strengthen them for new and higher endeavors.

Many years ago I saw a poor country boy standing on a platform before a large company of his schoolmates, trying to declaim one of the patriotic speeches of John Quincy Adams. The boys laughed at his awkwardness, and the flushes on his face showed that his heart resented their cruelty. When he had taken his seat the teacher arose and said: "You may laugh at him now, but the day is coming when you will rend the air in applauding his achievements." That boy never forgot the prophecy of his teacher. He determined to fulfill it, and he did fulfill it. To-day his fame is national and his power is imperial.

4. You expect of the man who claims to be your friend reproof when he beholds you in a course of wrong-doing. Jesus had no better friend than Peter, and yet he more often rebuked him than any other apostle. This is one of the gravest and most delicate duties of true friendship. No man attempts it without fear and trembling, because he knows how unwilling poor human nature is to receive reproof.

Anybody can denounce an enemy, but it takes a hero to rebuke a friend. It is an exceedingly painful duty and often results in the loss of the good

will of those to whom the rebuke is administered. But if you evade an obligation so important and sacred as this, you are not worthy to be called any man's friend.

I believe that all friendships based upon mutual confidence and love, and guided and sanctified by the verities of God's word, are imperishable. Nothing on the earth or above the earth can ever destroy them. They will go with us through the gates of death.

I love to think of heaven as the place where "those who meet shall part no more, and those long parted meet again." In that bright land beyond the starry heights, next to the rapture of meeting my risen and glorified Saviour will be the joy of reunion with those whose friendship has been the medicine and solace of my life in this world of suffering and sorrow.

In that radiant company of friends, to whose blessed fellowship I hope to ascend when my earthly cares and toils have ceased, are many of the men and women of Alabama, who were my loving, faithful counsellors and helpers in the long ago.

The terrible scourge which is sweeping through many communities of my native State, driving thousands of her noblest people from their business and homes, and consigning many to untimely graves, not only brings an aching sorrow to my heart, but

inspires me with a new and stronger affection for those upon whom this calamity has fallen. In Mobile, Selma, and Montgomery, where the pestilence is now doing its deadly work, where homes are draped in mourning and thousands of hearts are wrung with keen and lonely anguish, the earlier years of my ministry were spent. The men and women of those communities are my people. Their troubles are my troubles, their cares are my cares, their sorrows are my sorrows.

My Alabama friends, let me assure you that in this capital city of Tennessee there are thousands of good people who cherish for you a generous and tender sympathy, who commend you daily to God's loving and keeping care, and who stand ready to give substantial aid to those who have not been able to flee from the destroyer. Be of good cheer; trust in God; submit meekly to the discipline of his hand, and you will find a blessed compensation for all your present ills and anguish.

"Weeping may endure for a night,
But joy cometh in the morning."

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace."

In other days and in other places I have been your friend. Allow me to be the same friend to you now and here. Let me guide your troubled

spirits to a divine Friend, who "sticketh closer than a brother," a Friend who is responsive to all your sighs and griefs, and whose blessed invitation is, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Let me beguile your thoughts from the things that now distress you to the beauty and blessedness of that serene abode into which our redeemed spirits shall pass when life's cares and battles have ceased. On that bright shore beyond the inky sea there is no pestilence, no death, no partings, no tears. There beauty smiles eternally and pleasure never dies.

VII

OUR SOCIAL PROBLEMS

"Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." 2 Cor. 8 : 9.

THE introduction of sin into the world made every human being a pauper. Sin separates man from God. It prevents intercourse with God. In this condition the human soul is in darkness and bondage, and utterly destitute of nourishment and comfort. This is poverty a thousand times more deplorable and wretched than that which comes to our doors in rags. I would rather be as poor as the homeless and sore-footed tramp than be a spiritual pauper, going through this world of conflict and sorrow without God and without hope.

The infinite Jehovah, maker and ruler of all things, saw the poverty of this world and pitied it. He was rich, rich in himself, rich in attributes which rendered him infinitely higher and more glorious than any other being, and rich in having the homage, affection, and praise of all the unfallen intelligences of the universe.

Moved with pity for our poverty he became poor that we might be rich. He became a man, and the poorest of men. The foxes had their holes, the birds of the air their nests, but he had not where to lay his head. He stooped to the position of a servant. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

By this poverty and humiliation he made it possible for us to be rich and glorious. By faith in him we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ to an inheritance that is undefiled, incorruptible, and that fadeth not away.

In this scheme of recovering mercy we see the highest possible exhibition of unselfishness. He enriched the world by the sublimest self-denial that man or angel ever witnessed. We avail ourselves of the benefits of his sacrifice by imitating his example. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

As he loved us, so we are to love one another. As he came into the world and lived and suffered and died for us, so we are to live and suffer, and, if need be, die for one another. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

The spirit which prompted Cain to ask the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" is the spirit of Antichrist. It is the spirit which says, "Let every man take care of himself." It is the spirit which inspires a man to labor solely for his own advancement. It is the spirit which instigates all injustice, oppression, and cruelty. It is behind all man's inhumanity to man. It arrays neighbor against neighbor, class against class, community against community, and nation against nation.

That spirit dominates the age in which we live. It threatens this great nation with the crisis of the centuries. If there is not a reaction in the near future, it will culminate in such a social upheaval as the world has never seen. The voices of its millions of victims are calling to heaven, as the blood of the murdered Abel cried from the ground for divine vengeance upon Cain.

The power which propels the wheels of our present civilization is not love, but greed. In politics and commerce there is a premium on shrewdness and deception, while honesty and generosity are sneered at as virtues too sublimated and ethereal to be practised by creatures who wear earth about them, and who have to grapple with such problems as, "What shall I eat? and what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed?"

A civilization that is based on selfishness, and

that magnifies and rewards men who succeed by their superior cunning, has no power within itself to secure justice.

There is nothing that needs saving so much as a civilization that is guided by no moral principle, and that marches on without regard to God and his righteousness. The country that boasts of such a civilization is on the highroad to anarchy and barbarism.

Civilization is not a cause, but an effect. It is the product of character. It expresses the good and evil in the hearts of the people. Any government—national, State, or municipal—is just what the people make it. If a government tolerates such an iniquity as a bull fight, or a gambling house, or a bar-room, it is because the people are depraved enough to want such things.

The fountain of any civilization is in the moral character of the people who support it. If it is corrupt, it is because the people are corrupt, and it can be cleansed only by cleansing the people. The passage of more stringent laws will not stop the abominations to which I have referred. As long as the people do not rebel against indecent theatrical exhibitions they will continue to occur in all our theatres. As long as the people make no protest against obscene papers they will continue to be sold on our highways and at our news-stands.

We have already laws against these things. Why are they not enforced? Because the moral sentiment of the people is too weak to demand it. As long as the people are morally stupid, as long as they have but a feeble appreciation of the distinctions which God makes between right and wrong, vulgarity, uncleanness, and knavery will go unwhipped of justice. As long as the people are unjust there will be class legislation, despotic monopolies, political rings, bribery, and ballot-box stuffing. A righteous civilization can be established and maintained only by a people who love and practise righteousness.

We are like those foolish Galatians to whom Paul said, "Ye are bewitched." We have been bewitched by political teachers who have made us believe that the cure for all our social troubles is wiser legislation. Each of them has his economic theory and tells us that if we will send him to Congress, and he can get his theory transmuted into law, he will put an end to our social woes.

He may be sincere, but his proposition is absurd. Economic legislation deals only with things that are external to man's being. That is not what is needed. We need something that will touch the souls and transform the characters of our people.

The State does not make the people, the people make the State. The State is the expression of the

thought of the people. It is the product of the people's faith. It is the realization of their moral ideas.

When the people are personally honest, the State will be honest; when the people love justice, the State will be just; when the people abhor oppression, then oppressive legislation will be obliterated from our statute books. When the people are righteous enough to demand it, we shall have a faithful administration of every righteous law in our civil code. Good laws cannot be executed among a corrupt people.

Not long ago I read a very learned and beautiful oration on the old Roman law. The principles embodied in that great system of law emanated from a few great men. They did not come from the body of the Roman people. Those laws were in existence during all that dark period when the Roman government gave but little protection to life, liberty, and property.

Alfred the Great incorporated the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule in the English constitution, but they have been openly violated by every administration of the English government from King Alfred to Queen Victoria.

A great writer on sociology has said that: "Laws written on tables of stone and printed in statute books are but the playthings of politicians, if they

are not written in the hearts of the people. Laws cannot make men unselfish; police righteousness is not divine righteousness; the State cannot establish justice and righteousness on the earth. But justice and righteousness must establish the State."

What then is our hope? How can society be renovated? How can our civilization be purified? How can the State be so reconstructed as to furnish adequate protection to its subjects and all of their legitimate interests?

My answer to each of these questions is, By substituting for the law of self-interest, which now rules our social life, the law of self-sacrifice, the law by which God acts, the law which he illustrated when he became poor that we through his poverty might be rich.

The cross of Christ is the solvent of all the great social problems of the world. There God unveils his heart to men; there he reveals his redeeming love, a love which expresses itself in absolute self-renunciation. "He who knew no sin, was made sin for us." "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." "He died for us." "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities, . . and by his stripes we are healed."

In that complete oblation of himself God teaches us that the highest expression of love is self-sacrifice, and that it is only by the sacrifice of ourselves

that we can touch and supply the world's profoundest needs. The human race has never advanced one inch without human sacrifices. In every past age the men who pushed the world on and up to something better were martyrs. They suffered persecution, and in many instances death, for what they did for righteousness' sake.

Every great truth has secured public recognition only through the self-denials and heartaches of some moral hero. The world's darkness has been illumined only by the blaze of martyr-fires. What we have and enjoy to-day is the blood-bought wealth of the centuries. We can never pay to the generations that come after us more than an infinitesimal part of the debt which we owe to the generations that have preceded us. Any future progress must be secured by obedience to the same law, the law of self-sacrifice. Every inch must be gained and held by some struggling, suffering, unresting brain and heart.

My friend, is it the purpose of your life to be useful? If that is not your purpose and your dominant purpose, you have no claims upon the homage of the world. If you intend to be a disciple of Cain and repudiate all obligation to care for your brother man, you deserve to be treated as Cain was—branded as an outlaw. If you will not be your brother's keeper and burden-bearer, you are his enemy. You

will seize every opportunity to defraud, oppress, and degrade him. The principle which controls you will make you a monopolist, or a gambler, or a bank-robber, or an anarchist, or a nihilist.

But, if your purpose is to be useful—useful not only to yourself and your own family, but to the world—your life must be a sacrificial life. You must look out on this wide world and recognize every man in it as your brother and acknowledge your obligation to help him, as far as God gives you the ability and the opportunity. To serve your day and generation according to the will of God, to make any substantial and enduring contribution to the welfare of the race, you must make an oblation of your possessions and of yourself.

My brother, you sing,

> "In the cross of Christ I glory,
> Towering o'er the wrecks of time,"

but do you understand what you sing? Do you know the meaning of the cross? The cross does not release you from the law of sacrifice, but binds you to it by considerations that are immeasurable in their importance and solemnity. You must not only be reconciled to the cross, but reconciled to the law which it proclaims and to all the burden of toil, struggle, and sacrifice which it lays upon you.

The cross is not only the symbol of Christ's bur-

den, but also of your own. You glory in the cross he bore, but do you glory in the cross which he offers you? If your heart is throbbing with the passion that burned in him who hung upon that instrument of shame, your life will be in some degree a repetition of what he endured, and your favorite sentiment will be:

Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free?
No! There's a cross for every one,
And there's a cross for me.

The consecrated cross I'll bear
Till death shall set me free;
And then go home, my crown to wear,
For there's a crown for me.

"Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." This text should have a larger application to men of wealth than to the poorer classes, because they have larger possessions and more abundant opportunities for sacrifice. The rich men in the churches of this country have it within their power to solve our problems and save us from the fearful disasters which so seriously threaten us. Let these rich men become truly Christlike—let them become living sacrifices in the service of their God and country and race, and our clouds will disappear.

Jesus was no more under obligation to give himself wholly to the task of saving men than the Christian capitalist of Nashville is to consecrate himself and his possessions to the same work. God had no more claims to the service of Christ than he has to the time, talents, and labors of every Christian lawyer of this city.

The manufacturer has no more right to operate his factory solely for his own benefit than Jesus Christ had to work miracles for his own profit. The Christian has no more moral right to an unconsecrated business or capital, than Christ had to an unconsecrated cross.

Whenever the business men in our churches heartily accept this doctrine and conform their lives to it, we shall see Christianity grow as it never has grown. We shall see society quickly cleansed of its present abominations. We shall see the State purged of all favoritism and injustice; we shall see the strifes between capital and labor cease, and throughout all our borders a reign of righteousness, contentment, and prosperity.

God is calling to-day for men of capital who are willing to be financially crucified in order to establish the business of the world on the basis of the Golden Rule: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

In putting your own business upon that basis

you may suffer great loss for a time, your profits may be enormously decreased, it may even bankrupt you; but in making the sacrifice you will gain the fellowship of Christ, you will manifest his spirit, magnify his truth, and extend the conquests of his kingdom. If every Christian man in business would do this the whole commercial world would be revolutionized and established upon principles that would insure steady and permanent prosperity to all classes of every community.

The world has never been more prolific of golden opportunities for Christlike deeds than it is to-day. You can make the counting room as sacred as the sanctuary. You can make the legislative hall as hallowed as the mount on which Moses talked with God and received the law on tables of stone. You can make every gathering of the people, whether for religious, educational, political, or commercial purposes, as holy, harmonious, and happy as the disciples were on the mount of transfiguration. You can convert the din and roar of your industrial activity into a perpetual coronation hymn. You can be the knights of a nobler and grander chivalry than ever unfurled a flag or unsheathed a sword on any of the world's historic battlefields.

VIII

PAUL'S REPROBATION OF IDLENESS

"We commanded you that if any would not work, neither should he eat." 2 Thess. 3 : 10.

THE Apostle Paul was an indefatigable laborer. In this respect he made himself an example unto others. While he preached the gospel among the Thessalonians he supported himself by his own manual labor that he might emphasize the obligation upon every man to be industrious.

He regarded idleness, whether physical, mental, or spiritual, as ignoble and disgraceful. So thoroughly and intensely did he reprobate it that he published an apostolic edict that Christians should not feed those who refused to work. Paul wrote this commandment by divine inspiration, and we should regard it as an expression of God's will.

God, himself, is the greatest worker in the universe. I sometimes wish that the veil of nature could be lifted that we might see the Eternal Father at his work, busy throughout all space, slighting

nothing, exercising his wisdom and power wherever a star floats or an ocean rolls or a lily blooms.

We speak of the power of the sun, and how it made the forests which stood millions of years ago; how these forests were crushed by natural forces into beds of coal; and how the heat of the sun made all the verdure and beauty which bedeck the globe to-day. But the sun explains nothing. It simply tells us that there is a mind somewhere which makes the universe tremble with life and array itself in magnificent loveliness.

Could we look back of the ocean, we should see some hand holding it and hear some voice saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther." Could we gaze back of the approaching cloud, we should see some loving heart pouring out great streams of color in the west. Notwithstanding the mystery of the universe, one thing is clear: it is doing its work under the guidance and loving care of some great Being of infinite wisdom and power. It is he who supplies the burning fountains of the sun; it is he who pilots the stars; it is he who paints the vernal blossoms and carries perfume to the summer rose.

God, who is never idle, will not tolerate idleness in creatures made in his own image. Work is life. Man is dormant until he begins to labor. An idle, lazy person, is brainless, for sleepy brains are not a positive quantity.

Work is not simply doing, but being. When Sir John Lubbock was traveling among the South Sea natives, he found them so averse to any kind of activity that they did not care to talk upon new subjects. They had been asleep so many generations that the discussion of a new idea was painful to them, and Lubbock's happiness was their misery.

Mere existence is not life, and life is not measured by days and months and years. Activity is life. We live in thoughts and deeds, and he lives most who thinks most and does most.

Sometimes in naming the reasons why certain persons attend Sunday worship so seldom, the principal one, intellectual and spiritual indolence, is omitted. Such people know that if they go where an earnest and intelligent man expounds and applies the living word of the living God, they will be provoked to think, and probably to act, and the prospect of coming out of their intellectual and spiritual torpor is very painful to them.

On a recent tour through Florida I had an opportunity of studying the characteristics of the turtle and the alligator. All they seem to care for is existence. They move only when they are compelled to move. They aspire to no higher blessedness than that which they find in lying on a sand-bank and sleeping in a sun-bath. For no better reason some people will not put themselves within

reach of the living ministry. They are afraid of the risk of being shaken out of their moral indolence. They covet nothing better than the bliss of spiritual torpidity.

"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," is a law under which God has placed the whole world of mankind. Upon obedience to this law he has conditioned the welfare of the family, the stability of the State, the peace of society, and the prosperity and glory of the church. The disorders and miseries that afflict the world come from men's disregard of this primal law. I am confident that I do not exaggerate when I say that the world's huge and costly machinery of charitable relief, all our vast and expensive system of correction and punishment, our large police force, the oppressive taxation to which we are subjected, and the high prices which we pay for what we eat and drink and wear—may be traced to the prevalence of idleness, to the indisposition of thousands of men and women to bear their just proportion of the burden of labor which needs to be performed.

There is a definite weight of obligation overhanging every human life. If that obligation is not borne by the life to which it belongs, it must fall on other lives. When a man who belongs to some commercial, or political, or benevolent organization, refuses to do his part in supporting it, he thereby

increases the burden of every true and loyal member of that institution. Who are the vagrants, deadbeats, and criminals, that vast army of non-producers everywhere visible? They are the men and women who have repudiated God's primal law, quit the ranks of honest toilers, and left their burdens to be carried by other people.

How successful and happy the home in which there is a wise and equitable distribution of responsibility, care, and labor! Where father, mother, sons, and daughters, take counsel of each other and agree upon a well-defined plan of life for the household, and where each performs with patience, fidelity, and cheerfulness the part assigned to him, and is as intent upon promoting the welfare of others as he is upon his own pleasure and advancement—there is a prosperous and happy family.

But how clouded, inharmonious, and unlovely the home where there is no such agreement, no just distribution of labor, and one or two are struggling beneath the burdens of all. In many families there are vagrants who submit to no law, idlers who lift no load, insubordinates who recognize no authority and discharge no duty. These make wretchedness for all the household.

The world is cursed to-day with drones and cowards, who shirk their burdens and stand aloof from their places in the alignment of human service.

Such persons not only multiply the cares and labors of others, but restrict their own freedom and increase their own misery. Disowning their obligation to perform any part in the conflicts and toils incident to social life, they soon learn that such a policy of existence leads neither to happiness nor freedom.

Who are the men that vociferate most against the order of society? They are the men who have found out by sad experience that they cannot be idlers and obstructionists without bringing down upon their heads the just penalties of the laws which society has enacted for its government and protection. The moonshiners, the counterfeiters, the bank-robbers, and the gamblers, belong to the class which anathematizes government. They curse it because it interposes its authority and power to prohibit them from pursuing lives that not only are worthless to society, but multiply its burdens and woes.

There are some applications of this subject which are easily discernible by any thoughtful mind. There is a great work to be done; there are great battles to be fought and great burdens to be borne for the needy world in which we live; and this work can be done successfully and speedily only when all whose duty it is to help, step into line with an honest purpose to meet their share of obligation.

No informed man doubts that certain reforms are

needed in the government of this country. There are bad laws on our statute books which enrich and exalt one class of our people and impoverish and oppress another class; and these laws breed discontent, insubordination, and crime. These iniquitous statutes exist and operate from year to year and from decade to decade, not because a majority of the people are in favor of them, but because so few of them are disposed to accept their share of the conflict and labor needed to wipe out such unrighteous legislation. They are afraid of the political henchmen and the subsidized newspaper men who are interested in the preservation of these unjust laws.

In many of our Southern States we are confronted by a reign of mob law. Men suspected of crime are taken out of the hands of civil government and put to death in the most barbarous and brutal manner. In the keeping of sheriffs and constables, and even in the presence of judges engaged in the investigation of the charges preferred against them, they are clubbed into insensibility or perforated with bullets. The men who constitute these mobs defy government and go unwhipped of justice. They are able to do this, not because a majority of the people sympathize with their conduct and favor the administration of mob law, but because so few are willing to burden themselves with the trouble of bringing

these offenders to the bar of justice and demanding of the courts the infliction of the punishment which they so richly deserve.

If the brutal South Carolina mob which recently slaughtered a Negro and his household for no other offense than his acceptance of a postmastership from the Federal goverment, is not duly punished for the crime of murder, then South Carolina's civilization is a failure and her boasted manhood is a sham. If the present generation of Tennesseeans will not rise up and demand the just punishment of similar lawlessness in their own commonwealth, their blood is degenerate, and they are unworthy to claim kinship with the sturdy men who made the administration of Andrew Jackson a terror to evildoers.

A vast majority of the people of this city are opposed to gamblers and gambling institutions, and yet the current opinion is that Nashville is under a reign of gamblers. They prosecute their nefarious vocation in utter defiance of law and public sentiment. Why are they able to do this? For the simple reason that the people do not rise up in their majesty and demand of those charged with the administration of law the punishment and expulsion of this infamous combination of criminals and criminal-makers.

In every community there are hundreds of unfortunate men, women, and children who need relief

and whose condition is not provided for by any governmental system of help. This is a burden upon the community that could be easily borne if every person whose duty it is to help would bear his part. It weighs heavily upon some because the selfishness of many prevents an equitable distribution of it.

There is a certain weight of obligation upon every local congregation of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. A definite amount of money must be raised for the support of their own worship, and for the relief of their own destitute and suffering members. In addition to this, money is needed to support missions, both at home and abroad; and another large sum is required for the support of schools in which young men are being trained for the solemn duties of the gospel ministry.

There is a vast amount of work to be done in the Sunday-schools. Fathers and mothers send their children there to be instructed in the wisdom of God. This requires an army of men and women who have the grace and industry and patience to study and teach. It requires also a large force to operate our city mission stations, and to perform the work of religious visitation from house to house.

It is the large dormant element in every church that renders it so difficult to compass all of the obligations imposed by divine authority upon a congregation of believers. It is the refusal of so many

to bear their just proportion of the burden that makes it so heavy upon the shoulders of those who are willing to do their duty.

If there is one principle which a thoughtful, self-respecting, Christ-loving church-member should emphasize more than another, it is that no other member shall be allowed to bear the burdens which belong to him. He should stand up and manfully claim it as his sacred right and privilege to pay his just proportion of the money and to do his just proportion of the work required for the furtherance of the Lord's cause.

What shall I say of those who, convinced of the truth of the Christian religion and that the world's civilization is pivoted upon it, refuse to bow their necks to the yoke of Christ? There are men and women of this class before me this morning. To these I would submit a few questions. How can you reconcile your present attitude toward Christ's cause with your conceptions of right, obligation, honor, and self-respect? Is it not as truly your duty as mine to serve God? Has not the Son of God, who died for the sins of the whole world, done as much for you as he has for me? If the highest good of humanity depends upon the prevalence and maintenance of Christianity, upon what principle of ethics can you excuse yourself from giving your name, your example, and your resources to the sup-

port of its sacred cause? In your heart you wish success to that cause; but is it just, is it noble, is it honorable in you to stand aloof and take no part in the toil and conflict by which Christ's kingdom is advanced?

If you believe in an equitable distribution of the burdens of society, if you believe that in the great work of improving the world every virtue-loving and humanity-loving man should do his part, if you believe that the progress of the world and the highest welfare of men, both for time and eternity, depend upon the regenerating and conserving influences of Christian truth, how can you honestly claim to be a friend to either God or man while you refuse to give to the gospel the support of your own name and example? How can you satisfy your conscience, or even respect your own manhood, while you permit others to bear the burdens which legitimately belong to you?

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Some of you are in the evening of life. Your sun will soon set on a world which so far it has failed to bless. We appeal to you by every motive that can be drawn from the past, the present, and the future, from time and eternity, from the great God and the solemnities of approaching judgment, to make the most of the little hour that remains. Put into that hour a sincere repentance for your sins, a true and

living faith in him who died to make atonement for your sins, and the consecration of all you have and are to the work of promoting the salvation of your fellow-men.

How delightful to contemplate the sequel of a life that has been well spent, a life that has done its legitimate work and accomplished its divinely prescribed mission!

It gives us real pleasure and satisfaction to look upon something that is complete. We love to behold a picture in which the artist has slighted nothing. We are charmed by a speech replete with thought, truth, beauty, and eloquence from the first sentence of the exordium to the closing sentence of the peroration.

When we read a poem like Gray's "Elegy," or Tennyson's "In Memoriam," or Virgil's "Æneid," or Homer's "Iliad," we feel that its thoughts, words, and rhythm have all come through the hand of the finisher and that the work is complete. But how much more delightful to contemplate a finished life, a life which illustrates all the virtues that can adorn and dignify human character, a life full of useful service to God and man, a life that disappears like the sun at evening, followed by the benedictions of a grateful world, a life which angels applaud and over whose record God himself is heard to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

IX

RECEIVING DIVINE BLESSINGS

"Blessed be . . . the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble." 2 Cor. 1 : 3, 4.

THESE are the words of the most thoroughly poised and symmetrically developed man, save One, the world has ever seen. The human heart has never cherished a nobler and holier feeling than that to which he here gives utterance. He thanks God for comforts which he had received in great trials—thanks him, not so much for the relief which they gave him, as for the new strength which they imparted to him for the comforting of others in distress. He gloried in his tribulations, because in them he had experiences of God's presence and power which enlarged his capacity for instructing, comforting, and strengthening other men, and especially other Christians.

To covet gifts for the use we can make of them in promoting the world's welfare is the best proof of a regenerated heart and a Christlike character. So

much more did this man Paul love others than himself, that he was willing to be accursed from God if by bearing a divine malediction he might save the apostate Jewish people.

Blessed is the man to whom God has given the secret of rejoicing even in tribulation. Blessed is the man who can see and enjoy at all times what is good in the world, and who can transmute what is evil in itself into elements of strength and happiness. It is the condition of a man's heart that makes the world what it is to him. He sees things as he is.

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

I sometimes meet a person to whom the world is a great picture gallery. Wherever he turns his vision he beholds a panorama of bewitching beauty. If you should pluck out his eyes it would not destroy his happiness, because his heart is full of bright and beautiful pictures. The conditions of happiness are not without but within him. This fact gives him the mastery of his environment and makes all things contribute to his felicity.

I suppose you have not forgotten the fable of the firebrand and the lamp. One day they went out to see what they could find. The firebrand came back and wrote in its journal: "The whole world is very dark." When the lamp returned it made this entry

in its journal: "I did not find any darkness in all my journey; it was bright everywhere." The explanation of this difference between the observation of the firebrand and that of the lamp is, that the latter carried a light and the former did not.

Every man in going through the world will find just what he takes with him. If he takes darkness he will find darkness, and if he takes light he will find light. If there is beauty in his soul he will find beauty in every spot and in every object on which his eye rests. If he is selfish and mean he will find selfishness and meanness everywhere. If he has a heart whose sympathies embrace the whole world, he will find a kindly sympathy and a sweet charity greeting him in every community that he enters.

Two men came from a distant city to visit our Tennessee Centennial Exposition. When they returned to their homes each gave his impressions of the "White City." One said, "Oh, it's a big show and big crowds go to see it, but I got very tired of it." The other, with a feeling akin to rapture, expressed his appreciation of everything that he saw. He described every building and the exhibits which it contained. When he spoke of the Parthenon—an exact reproduction of the original—and of its beautiful specimens of painting and sculpture, the creations of the world's best genius, his eye flashed

with the inspiration of his theme. He passed rapidly from wonder to wonder of the great pageant, and concluded with a description of the music, which he declared to be so sublimating in its influence that he could scarcely tell "whether he was in the body or out of the body." One of these men had appropriated nothing. The other had absorbed everything. The great scene was photographed in all its beauty on his inner being, and there it will remain to be studied and enjoyed through all the days of his coming life.

If a man has music in his soul, he hears music everywhere. Some men can walk through a forest on a May morning and find more inspiration in listening to the warbling of the birds than some other men would get from the grandest music that human voices can make.

Give me the man who sees and enjoys all the good in his earthly allotment. Give me communion with the soul that extracts honey from every flower that blossoms along its homeward journey. Give me for a friend and companion the man who finds nuggets of gold in the rocks over which his feet stumble. Give me for a counselor and guide the man who beholds objects of beauty and loveliness all along the pathway of toil and conflict. Give me for a fellow-traveler in life's pilgrimage the man who finds that,

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods;
There is a rapture on the lonely shore;
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar.

Give me for a comforter in distress the man who sees angels in the disguises of earth, and gets a blessing from them ere they spread their radiant wings for homeward flight.

There is a great building in Europe, whose dome is so shaped that sounds uttered beneath it come back in a delightful response of melodious music. Even a discord is converted into harmony as it floats up into the resonant vault and returns to the ear.

Such a dome hung over the soul of that grand old apostle who said: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," and who, while incarcerated in a Roman dungeon and stained with the blood of his own lacerated flesh, sang praises to God. Beneath that dome, visible only to the eye of faith, Paul's groans and lamentations were converted into anthems, and every discordant sound was transmuted into sweetest harmony.

What are the causes of your discontent and unhappiness? You think that if you had more money, more distinction, and more power, the trouble would be cured. You are under a delusion, a Satanic delusion. The causes of your discontent are not in your circumstances, but in yourself. Let

God into your soul, let him be your constant guest, and you will easily master your circumstances. Let the glory of his love shine through your sorrows, and they will be converted into joys. Get a sweet song in your heart, and melody will fill all the air about you. Even the wailing storm will make soothing and restful music to your troubled spirit.

Get God's beauty into your soul and you will see beauty everywhere, in the heavens above and in the earth beneath. Get God's peace into your life, and you will find peace all along your journey to the skies. Put yourself by faith in such relations with Jesus Christ that he will be "all the day long your joy and your song," and then, like Paul, you will bless God even in adversity and extract comfort even from the bitterest tribulation.

My second remark is upon the nobility of the man who uses every divine blessing bestowed upon him in blessing his needy fellow-men.

Paul sought comfort from God that he might use it in comforting his brethren. The bed-rock principle of Christianity binds us to live for the welfare of others. Christ came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," and he taught his disciples that in the judgment of the last day he would measure their fidelity to him by what they had done in caring for the poor and sick and distressed of this world.

In that great day he will say to those upon the

right hand of his throne: "I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." And when in amazement they reply, "Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" he will say, "Ah, you did not know it, but every time you fed a hungry pauper, or gave a cup of water to a thirsty pilgrim, or cared for an orphan, or nursed a sick neighbor, or comforted a prisoner, or opened your door to a stranger, you ministered unto me."

I endorse the sentiment of a distinguished Christian writer, who says: "The incense which God loves best is not that which is burned in a golden censer and wastes its perfume on the air, but that which is burned in the habitations of the needy, to cheer some human weariness, or comfort some human sorrow."

My brethren, I seriously fear that many of you are under the fatal delusion that you are doing the vital thing in religion and meeting your obligations to God by simply coming to a religious service in this sanctuary on the Lord's Day. Some of you seem to be utterly blind to the truth, that our Sab-

bath worship here is only preparation for the real work of religion. Oh, that God would give me power to strike the scales from your eyes!

Your divinely appointed task lies not within these sanctuary walls, but outside of them. Your real battles for God and his cause must be fought, not within this sacred enclosure, but out yonder in the great wailing world of sin and suffering.

Abou Ben Adhem awoke one night from a dream of peace, and saw, by the moonlight in his room, an angel writing in a book of gold. He asked, "What writest thou?" The angel answered, "The names of those who love the Lord." "Is mine there?" "Nay," replied the angel. Then Abou softly but cheerily said, "I pray thee, then, write me as one who loves his fellow-men." The next night the vision came again, disclosing the names of those who loved the Lord; and lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest. The obvious meaning of this legend is, that we love God when we love and serve our fellow-men.

Lying out on the very surface of revealed religion is the great truth that God enriches no man, temporally or spiritually, without laying upon him at the same time the obligation to use the blessings bestowed on him in supplying the needs of other men.

My brother, why has God given you material wealth? Why does he prosper you in business,

and permit you year after year to add to your already ample fortune? That you may live in a mansion, fare sumptuously every day, move in a fashionable circle, and be courted and flattered by a fawning world? If this is your interpretation of God's goodness to you, you are worse than blind, and need conversion from an error that is mischievous and ruinous in the last degree.

You are simply God's steward. Your money is God's money. If you squander it in the gratification of unholy pride and ambition, you rob God, defraud the world, and doom yourself to incurable wretchedness.

What is true in this respect of material wealth is equally true of knowledge. Knowledge is a talent which God requires us to use, not for our own pleasure and aggrandizement, but for the elevation and happiness of those who are inferior to us in intellectual attainment.

There is a Baptist church in one of our Western cities which has among its members a distinguished gentleman who is a specialist in the English classics. He is regarded as very high authority in that department of learning. That man has organized all the young people of his church and congregation into a class for the study of English literature. He gives one evening of every week to this work. He receives no pecuniary compensation for the service.

His Christian zeal is as fervent as his learning is profound. His unselfish use of his intellectual culture has given him great religious influence over the young people of that community, and when he comes before his Bible class, on Sunday morning, he finds there the young men and the young women of his literary class, eager and impatient to hear him expound the word of God.

Paul thanked God for the comfort bestowed upon him, because it increased his power to comfort his afflicted brethren. It was a great thing to feel the warmth of God's love permeating his own heart, and the benediction of God's peace settling upon his own soul; but the joy of this experience was almost forgotten in the greater gladness of knowing that he had gained new power for comforting and cheering the hearts of his fellow-toilers and fellow-sufferers. O Paul, noble, Christlike Paul! there is no place in human admiration and affection that is too high for thee. Thou didst call thyself "less than the least of all saints," but we are persuaded that of all the jeweled crowns in heaven, thine is the brightest, save one.

Peter, overcome by fear, denied his Lord, and thus brought upon himself disgrace and anguish. Foreseeing that he would repent and be forgiven, Jesus said to him, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." By this he meant that

Peter, in going through the pangs of remorse, and in finding forgiveness for his terrible sin, would learn lessons that would be very helpful to his brethren, both in resisting temptation and in recovering from sinful mistakes.

Who doubts that Peter did strengthen his brethren when the joy of salvation was restored to him. I sometimes imagine that I see him standing in a group of his fellow-Christians, and that I hear him saying: "Brethren, let no man among you follow my example by denying the Master, because such moral dastardy is a crime against the best being that ever breathed the atmosphere of earth, and because it will bring upon him an indescribable spiritual darkness and anguish. Save yourselves from such an affliction, by standing up bravely for your Lord in the face of every difficulty and danger. But if, through the weakness of the flesh, any of you should, like me, fail and fall away, do not despair; do not follow the example of poor Judas; do not let your remorse drive you to madness and self-destruction; but remember that the Master still loves you and intercedes for you, and that if you will only return to him and fall at his feet, he will lift you up, enfold you in the arms of his love, bestow upon you his forgiving grace, and breathe upon your troubled spirits the benediction of his unspeakable peace."

David fell, and when he fell, darkness covered him and peace forsook him. But he still believed in God's recovering mercy, and in the midst of his deepest distress, he prayed: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit; then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

Brethren, in prayerfully studying the condition of this church, I have reached this conclusion: Many of you, through worldliness and neglect of duty, have lost "the blessedness you knew when first you saw the Lord." You are walking in darkness; you are without comfort, without peace; the spirit of prayer has forsaken you; your service of God is the deadest formality; you get out of it no inspiration, no help. In this condition you are clogging the wheels of Zion; you are making it almost impossible for the church to move forward and win a victory for God. Not until you follow the example of David and Peter by retracing your steps, not until you have felt the pangs of a godly sorrow for your sins, not until you have sought and found forgiveness, and God has restored to you the joy of salvation, can this church make a move towards the enemies of Christ with any reasonable hope of success. Not until then can she teach transgressors the way of truth and life, not until then will God use her for the conversion of sinners.

An awful responsibility is upon you. If you can be made to feel it, and can be persuaded to put yourselves once more in touch with God, and in the line of Christian rectitude and duty, there is in reserve for us a victory that will make gladness throughout all the camp of Israel on earth, and provoke even the glorified hosts of heaven to lift up their myriad voices in higher and sweeter notes of praise!

X

INGERSOLL AND HIS INFIDELITY[1]

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. . . The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." Ps. 19 : 7, 8.

Mr. Ingersoll is a very successful trimmer. He would not say in this latitude what he has said in other regions of our country. Down here in the South, where Christian sentiment prevails, he is simply an agnostic, and refrains from much of the blasphemous ribaldry that has characterized his utterances in some sections of the North. Among the infidel Germans of the Northwest he is more than an agnostic, he is an atheist, unsparing in his denunciations of everything sacred to the Christian.

The fact that this man is heard by multitudes of people, and that some have had the faith of their childhood disturbed and even uprooted by his assaults upon Christianity, is a sufficient warrant for a brief discussion of some of his views.

Mr. Ingersoll assumes that belief in God is in-

[1] Delivered as a reply to Ingersoll's lecture, in Nashville, on "Why Am I an Agnostic?"

compatible with reason, and that men who cherish this belief are weak and foolish. The Bible declares that "the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," and it requires only a moderate exercise of our reason to prove this true, and that Mr. Ingersoll, and not the believer in God, is the fool.

Every rational man must and does admit the eternal existence of something. If Mr. Ingersoll denies that the universe came from something he is the only infidel who does. Only a lunatic or an idiot would say that something came from nothing. It is incontrovertibly and everlastingly true that "from nothing nothing comes." This being true, we are compelled to believe that something has always existed, and that in that eternal something which antedates all other things, the universe had its origin. If Mr. Ingersoll is not at variance with all other infidels he accepts this conclusion.

What is that something which antedates all other things, and from which all other things derive their existence? The Bible calls it God, but Mr. Spencer has named it the "unknown and unknowable." The name is not essential; but whether you call it protoplasm, or fire-mist, or force, or the unknown and unknowable, or God, you must admit that it is eternal, and that out of it all other things have come into existence.

If that original something is the parent of all

other things, it has intelligence. If that original something is protoplasm, it is thinking protoplasm. If it is fire-mist, it is intelligent fire-mist. If it is force, it is rational force.

Why do I say this? Because it is a self-evident truth that a thing can communicate only what it possesses. Was that first thing protoplasm? Then you and I came from it, and if you and I are intelligent beings there is intelligence in protoplasm. If it has intelligence, it is supreme intelligence, for there is nothing anterior or superior to it.

What was the origin of matter? Was it created? If it was, there must be a personal creator, because a creation without a creator is unthinkable. If you say that matter was not created but has always existed, I will ask you another question, What was the origin of motion? Was it created? If it was, there must be a personal creator, because there cannot be a creation without a creator.

If you say that motion is eternal, that it never had a beginning, I will ask you a third question, What is the origin of thought? Is it a creation? If it is, there is a personal creator. If it is not a creation and has existed from all eternity, then we are compelled to admit the existence of an eternal thinking being.

I challenge this infidel teacher, who comes to enlighten the benighted minds of our people for a con-

sideration of five hundred dollars a night, to inject into his next performance an answer to this argument.

In common with other materialists, Mr. Ingersoll claims that human life is transmitted. I will not controvert that proposition. But let him tell us from what the first man's life was transmitted. Perhaps he would answer, "From the monkey." If that is true, from what was the monkey's life transmitted? Perhaps he would answer, "From the alligator." If that is true, from what was the alligator's life transmitted? From the lizard. Then from what was the lizard's life transmitted? Thus we may go back and back until we come to protoplasm.

What a relief to men like Ingersoll if the human mind would stop there. But it will not stop there. No sooner has the infidel declared that human life had its origin in protoplasm than I, and all other men who think, want to know where protoplasm got its life.

Who then is the fool? The man who believes in a personal creator or the man who goes through the world selling his atheism for a consideration of five hundred dollars a night?

In one of his lectures Mr. Ingersoll declares that the miracles of the Bible are frauds—the mere tricks of men who made their living by imposing upon

human ignorance and credulity. He claims that Jesus Christ was "only a sleight-of-hand man," and that he gained his pre-eminence among his associates only by his superior skill in feats of legerdemain.

No man who admits that the universe is a creation and that it came from the hands of a personal creator, can with any show of reason deny the possibility of miracles. To declare that a miracle is an impossibility is equivalent to saying that God is incapable of performing a miracle. It is unmitigated folly to assume that God cannot do anything that he chooses to do.

If it is admitted that God has performed one miracle, it is perfectly compatible with sound reasoning to believe that he has performed other miracles. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." "The worlds were made by the word of God." The fact here recorded was a miracle. Creation, whether by evolution or otherwise, was a miracle. The creation of the germ or the germs out of which the whole physical universe has grown, was a miraculous work, because it brought into existence something at a period when nothing existed but the divine Creator.

Did Christ perform miracles? Nicodemus believed that he did, for he went to him in person and said, "No man can do these miracles which thou

doest, except God be with him." Nicodemus was a member of the great ecclesiastical high court of the Jews, a man of intelligence and learning, and one not liable to become the victim of a base trickster.

The evangelists tell us that Jesus performed miracles; but Mr. Ingersoll says no one knows who wrote the four Gospels. When he says this he convicts himself either of stupidity or dishonesty.

He does not doubt that John Milton wrote "Paradise Lost," or that Newton wrote "The Principia," or that Tom Paine wrote the "Age of Reason." Why does he not doubt it? Because he accepts the testimony of history and tradition.

Our belief that the Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John rests upon the same kind of evidence. The testimony which sustains the authenticity of these sacred books is not only of the same kind that Mr. Ingersoll accepts with reference to "Paradise Lost," "The Principia," and the "Age of Reason," but it is much more voluminous and conclusive, because the Gospels have occupied a much larger space in the thought of the world, and have been subjected to a more thorough investigation.

When Mr. Ingersoll says that no one knows who wrote the four Gospels, he charges all the earliest writers of the Christian era who quoted from these books, believing them to be the works of Matthew,

Mark, Luke, and John, with disgraceful ignorance and stupid credulity.

Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian hated Christianity as bitterly as he, but their writings abound in quotations from the New Testament, and they never questioned its authenticity. They never insinuated in the remotest degree that Christians of their day were mistaken as to the authorship of the four Gospels or any other part of the New Testament.

I defy this infidel traducer to furnish one jot or tittle of evidence to show that any opponent of Christianity, during the first four centuries after Christ, ever questioned the genuineness of the New Testament, or expressed even a doubt as to the honesty of the men who claimed to be eyewitnesses of the miracles which they recorded.

Mr. Ingersoll says that if Jesus had wrought the miracles which it is said he performed, the Jews would not have crucified him. This is a specimen of his ignorance of history. Every student of the Bible knows that the Jews did not deny the reality of the miracles of Jesus, but claimed that he worked these miracles through Satanic power.

Mr. Ingersoll does not deny that Christ claimed to perform miracles, but declares that he was a deceiver, a sleight-of-hand man, a peripatetic trickster, who bamboozled the ignorant and unsuspecting rabble that followed him.

What respect can any rational man have for such an indictment? Can you believe that the man who taught the purest morality ever given to the world, and who lived the most benevolent life that men ever witnessed, and who died to bear testimony to what he taught, was a mere wandering vendor of tricks which he had learned from Egyptian magicians? No, you cannot believe it. Neither does Mr. Ingersoll believe it. Why then does he say it? Ask the ticket man when you go to purchase your next admission to his lecture.

When Mr. Ingersoll says that "the Bible is the most infamous book in the universe," he means, evidently, that of all the books in the universe, its standard of ethics is the lowest. Is there any basis of reason or fact for this accusation? What is the morality of the Bible? We may learn what it is, not by listening to a man who gets five hundred dollars a night for misrepresenting the Bible, but by going directly to the book itself.

Here are some samples of Bible ethics. "Honor thy father and thy mother." "Children, obey your parents." "Thou shalt not commit adultery." "Thou shalt not steal." "Thou shalt not murder." "Thou shalt not bear false witness." "Love thy neighbor as thyself." "As ye have opportunity do good unto all men." "As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them."

"Love your enemies." "Above all things have fervent charity." "See that none render evil for evil unto any man." "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." "Keep thyself pure." "Shun the very appearance of evil."

In these passages we have an epitome of biblical morality. Is there anything here that will warrant this man in calling the Bible "the most infamous book in the universe"? What manner of man would Mr. Ingersoll become if he should obey all of these righteous precepts? A good man? Or the bad man that he is?

Jesus Christ, in his incarnate life, was the perfect embodiment and illustration of the ethics of the gospel which he preached. What was there in his life that deserved condemnation from any man? Set over against Mr. Ingersoll's reprobation of the morals of the New Testament the words of Mr. Lecky, one of the most intellectual and learned men of modern times. In his history of "European Morals" he says:

"It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with impassioned love; which has shown itself capable of acting on all nations, ages, temperaments, and conditions; which has not only been the

highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of his three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists." This is the testimony of a great scholar and critic, a man whose learning is as much deeper than Mr. Ingersoll's as mid-ocean is deeper than the little artificial lake on the grounds of our late Tennessee Centennial Exposition.

An infallible and universal standard of right and wrong is an absolute necessity to mankind. There must be such a standard somewhere. But where is it? It is not in ourselves. It is not what we feel, or think. That would make as many standards as there are individuals in the world, because no two human beings feel and think exactly alike.

If every man were a law unto himself, there would be nothing but social chaos on the earth. The infallible and universal standard is the morality of the Bible, the essence of which is expressed in the Golden Rule, "As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Neither man nor angel can conceive of anything higher and better than that.

As Mr. Ingersoll does not admit the existence of God he does not believe in any universal law of

human rectitude. If there is no God, every man must decide for himself what is right and what is wrong. This is Mr. Ingersoll's doctrine. He claims to be the ultimate judge for himself as to what is good and what is evil. What he commends is right, and what he condemns is wrong.

This infidel is perfectly consistent with himself when he says, "I do not believe in the New Testament doctrine of non-resistance." He believes that a man ought to resist anything that infringes on his natural liberty, the liberty to do whatever he desires to do.

Society, in its organized capacity, is ever infringing upon man's natural liberties. It demands, as a consideration for the protection which it gives an individual, that he surrender his right to do anything that he wishes to do. Theoretically, at least, Ingersoll is an anarchist. He is against all external government, human or divine.

He is consistent with this doctrine when he defends suicide. He believes that any man who is tired of life has the right to blow his brains out, and leave his dependent wife and children to endure the woes of poverty. Some years ago one of his disciples poisoned himself, and beside his dead body was one of Ingersoll's books containing his damnable defense of suicide.

But Mr. Ingersoll was strangely inconsistent with

himself when he said, "Slavery is a crime that includes all other crimes; it is the joint product of the kidnapper, pirate, thief, murderer and hypocrite."

I suppose there is not a man among us who does not rejoice at the downfall of slavery in this country, though he may deprecate the methods by which its overthrow was accomplished. But we are not prepared to believe that every man in this republic who owned a slave was a pirate, or a thief, or a murderer, or a hypocrite. We do not believe that Patrick Henry, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington, were pirates, thieves, murderers, and hypocrites. We do not believe that even Mr. Ingersoll's New England's ancestors, the first slaveholders on American soil, were a combination of pirates, thieves, murderers, and hypocrites.

"There is no God, or if there be one, we cannot know it. The Bible is a lie; Jesus Christ was a sleight-of-hand man; whatever a man believes to be right is right; death is an eternal sleep; or, if there be another life, we cannot know it."

This is Mr. Ingersoll's creed. Does any man in his right mind believe it is better than Christianity? Mr. Ingersoll said here: "I hate your religion; I hate your God; while I live I am going to try to civilize Christians; I always hated Jehovah, and used to wish that somebody would kill him."

Does any man, who is not bereft of reason, believe that the universal adoption of such blasphemous sentiments would advance the world in virtue, happiness, and prosperity? Would it reform the drunkard? Would it make virtuous and useful men of thieves, bandits, and murderers? Would it elevate our characters, dignify the objects of our pursuit, and render us patient and cheerful in adversity?

Would it improve our social condition? Would it subdue wrong and establish justice? Would it enlarge our sympathies, harmonize discordant elements, and bind together the dissevered races of mankind in the bonds of a great, virtuous, loving, and happy brotherhood?

No man, who has mind enough to understand the influence of principles upon conduct, believes that the prevalence of Ingersollism would accomplish these results.

Mr. Ingersoll himself sees in this proposed substitute for Christianity no real benefit to the world. The only tangible blessing to any one which comes within the range of his agnostic vision, when he discusses these questions, is the five hundred dollars which he is to receive for his blasphemous work.

I make no hasty and reckless assertion when I say that the desire on the part of thousands and hundreds of thousands of men and women to re-

organize society on the basis of Ingersoll's infidelity, is at the bottom of the evils which now threaten the existence of this government.

All this unjust legislation in the interest of monopoly had its origin in the hearts of men who repudiate moral government and the doctrine of retribution after death. All these wild anarchistic methods, which certain elements of the oppressed classes are adopting for the redress of their grievances, are inspired by a belief in the utterances of Mr. Ingersoll.

Ingersoll may harbor in his breast no revolutionary purpose. I am inclined to believe that he has nothing in view beyond the accumulation of money and the gratification of his mad passion for vulgar notoriety. But the doctrine which he teaches, falling as it does upon the ears of millions of ignorant and already dissatisfied people, if not counteracted, is destined to bring forth an unprecedented harvest of debauchery, lawlessness, and crime.

Christianity is not an experiment. It has been tried, and it has not failed. Wherever it has been taught in its original simplicity and purity, it has made men better and advanced every interest of society.

As authority upon this subject, every intelligent person would put James Anthony Froude immeasurably above Robert G. Ingersoll. In a recent work

he says, "All that we call modern civilization, in a sense which deserves the name, is the visible expression of the transforming power of the gospel."

Gladstone, the most colossal man of modern England, was persistent in declaring that all that is best in the civilization of this century is traceable directly or indirectly to the gospel of the Man of Galilee.

Bismarck, who was a diligent and devout reader of the Bible, said that he could not understand how any one could endure existence unsustained by a belief in its teachings.

How foolish to turn away from the mature wisdom of these majestic men to listen to the rhetorical vaporings and silly ribaldry of an infidel hireling.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." It puts into earthy, corrupt, groveling human nature a new principle of life. It quickens and unfetters all the higher and finer faculties of the human soul, starts it on a career of noblest service here, and fits it for an immortality of honor and blessedness in a life to come. A religion that does this is surely not "the most infamous thing in the universe." A God who has given us such a religion does not deserve to be "hated and killed."

Run a parallel between the life of Robert Ingersoll, a hired defamer of the Christian's God and

Saviour, and the life of Florence Nightingale, who, animated by the spirit of him who "went about doing good," devoted every capacity and energy of her existence to the relief of human suffering, and went to her grave laden with the benedictions of a grateful world. Make the comparison and you will see something of the infinite superiority of the gospel of love and immortality over the gospel of dirt and suicide.

XI

WHAT IS SIN?

"Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3 : 4.

HERE we have God's definition of sin. This is what the human conscience everywhere declares it to be. This is what human history proves it to be. Men have made many fruitless efforts to overthrow the doctrine that sin is a violation of divine law. Some have tried to maintain the foolish philosophy which says that there are two Gods; that sin is the offspring of one and virtue of the other; that good and evil are essential to each other, and must therefore exist forever. Other men have belabored themselves to prove that sin is inherent in matter, and therefore is physical; that it belongs entirely to the body; that it is strong when the body is strong, and weak when the body is weak, and that the soul is in no degree responsible for it.

If either of these philosophies be true, it is worse than folly in us to be concerned about sin. If we are not responsible for it, and it is something entirely beyond our control, then our guilt is only im-

aginary, and the men whom we are wont to call felons are as innocent as angels of light.

But if the Bible is true, and the human conscience does not lie, sin is the transgression of divine law; and if it is the transgression of divine law, to commit sin is to incur guilt, and all who are guilty before God are under sentence of death.

"Sin is the transgression of the law." Paul is here speaking of God's moral law, a law written on the human constitution and clearly revealed in the sacred Scriptures. This law forbids us to do certain things, and lays upon us the obligation to do certain other things.

To reach some conception of your guilt you have only to take the Ten Commandments as interpreted by Christ's Sermon on the Mount, and in the light of them ask yourself this question: "How often have I done what is here forbidden and failed to do what is here required of me?" You cannot recall one transgression in a thousand, and yet you can remember enough to keep you counting for the rest of your life.

Why do men violate the law of God? Is not that law wise and just and good? Does not obedience to it render human character beautiful and lovely? Should not every human being covet a life in harmony with the perfect law of God?

Is not virtue more desirable than vice? Should

not every man desire moral cleanness? Is there anything more beautiful than innocence? How bewitchingly lovely is a young life from which the morning dew of purity has not been brushed away by the hand of corruption! If conformity to divine law is the very essence of good character, and makes life peaceful, happy, and luminous, why do men despise and violate that law?

Sin, as seen in its last analysis, is selfishness. Any revolt against God, any violation of his holy law, is simply the assertion of self, the determination to do what we like to do and not what we ought to do.

What is behind murder? What begets murder? Nothing but a selfish passion that must be gratified, even at the cost of a human life and the destruction of a human home. What is theft? It is self, appropriating what does not belong to it. What is lying? It is self, seeking to mislead for its own advantage. What is drunkenness? It is brutal selfhood feeding its own vile passions. What is the drunkard-maker? The incarnation of a selfish ambition. To gratify his greed of gain he would wreck a human life, corrupt a human soul, drown a peaceful home in sorrow, multiply widows and orphans, debauch a city, destroy a nation, and turn paradise into pandemonium.

To the selfish man the world is nothing but a great mirror, in which he sees nothing but a

million-fold reflection of himself. Nothing interests him but the sound of his own name, the cry of his own lust, and the sight of his own possessions.

All sin, in its ultimate analysis, is the sin of self. You break God's law only because you want to displace it with a law of your own. You reject the God of the universe only because you want to be a god unto yourself.

What are the fruits of sin? We shall never abhor sin as it deserves to be abhorred until we have an intelligent conception of the terrible mischief of it.

Sin makes us debtors to divine justice. To me debt is one of the ugliest words in the English language. When I was a little boy my father came home from business one day, sat down by my mother, and uttered the most distressful moans I had ever heard. When she asked for an explanation of his conduct, he said, "My dear wife, I am in debt." I was too young to know the meaning of the word, but supposed it to indicate some very serious bodily ailment that required the immediate attention of the family physician.

Not many months after this incident, my father returned from market with the proceeds of his cotton crop and, taking a number of papers from one pocket and a roll of money from another, he said to my mother, in a voice that was simply jubilant, "Wife, I'm out of debt." I did not know what

that was, but supposing it to be some great deliverance, I ran as fast as my little feet could take me to every member of the household, exclaiming at the top of my voice, "Father's out of debt, father's out of debt."

Oh, the moaning and groaning of the world today over debts—debts that were so easy to make, but which are now so hard to pay!

Young man, I solemnly warn you against the ruinous folly of burdening yourself with debts. I beseech you to record a vow that you will never put upon yourself this harrowing affliction. If you have an income of only a hundred dollars a year, live within it. Live within it, if you have to sleep in a garret, wear second-hand clothing, and subsist on bread and water. As you value your own self-respect and manhood, and the proud satisfaction of standing before the world and saying, "I owe no man anything," give a wide berth to those who would persuade you to live beyond your income.

The bitter experiences which we have under the burden of financial obligations, are but faint intimations of the incomparably deeper misery of conscious indebtedness to divine justice. That is a debt we can never pay. That is a debt which accumulates daily and hourly, and with fearful rapidity. See if you can arrive at any definite conception of its present proportions. Calculate the

indebtedness incurred by the commission of just one sin. But how can you calculate it without being able to measure the majesty and holiness of God's law, and the endless consequences of your sin upon the order and happiness of God's universe? If you had the exact data with which to begin, if you knew the indebtedness incurred by one transgression, and the whole number of your transgressions, it would require the rest of your life to calculate your present indebtedness to God's justice.

My friend, what you owe must be paid, even to the uttermost farthing, or the penalty will be inflicted upon you. The magnitude and awfulness of that penalty cannot be expressed in the language of mortals. It is "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." But no human mind can compass the significance of these inspired words. If you knew what Christ suffered in that hour when he turned his dying eyes to a darkened heaven and cried, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" you might measure the agony of a human soul, banished from the "presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power" into everlasting darkness.

Sin not only lays upon us a burden of a debt which we can never remove, but it fastens upon us the chains of a bondage from which we can never

emancipate ourselves. A few years ago I visited a State prison. As I looked upon the poor creatures incarcerated there, I tried to fathom their anguish. I thought of their fruitless sighing for liberty, their constant yearning for pure air and the gladdening sunshine, their loathing of the prison food, and their sense of isolation from everything beautiful and good.

I went into a cell occupied by a man who was under sentence of death. The only light that relieved the darkness of that cell came through a little opening in the wall. The air was freighted with impurity. I looked into the face of that doomed man, and read there the record of the terrible struggles through which he had passed. His once stalwart form had wasted to a skeleton; the dungeon darkness, the foul air, and the unwholesome food, added to the woes of conscience and the pangs of an incurable grief, had sapped the foundations of his strength. All that was only a shadow of the bondage of sin. No chains are so real and so galling as those which bind the guilty soul, and no darkness is so dense and horrible as that which envelops the slave of sin.

O ye who profane God's name and desecrate God's Sabbath, and ye who deceive and defraud in business and politics, and ye who frequent bar-rooms, gambling houses, and other places of uncleanness,

I am guilty of no extravagance of speech when I say that ye are the devil's galley slaves. The last vestige of your freedom is gone. Every day and hour ye do the bidding of the same taskmaster whom devils and damned spirits serve. This terrible bondage grows worse and worse as the years come and go. Every day you sink to some lower depth. Every sin which you commit to-day will be prolific of greater sins to-morrow. Every act of uncleanness whets your appetite for something still more foul and loathsome.

If this is your bondage in the present world, what must it be in that other world, which is the dumping-ground for all the filth of God's universe? Who can measure the possibilities of a human soul in a career of depravity where all restraints upon its devilish passions are removed? What imagination can depict the horrors of existence in such a place? What artist can paint the abominations of that receptacle of all uncleanness, and the terrors of that gulf of outer darkness, through which no star will ever float to tell of coming day?

Another of the baleful fruits of sin, is alienation from God. The man who is under the dominion of sin is absolutely without fellowship with God.

A wicked man once said to a Christian minister, "You may speak to me on any subject but religion." That man was not an infidel; his convictions were

on the side of religion; but loving sin and serving Satan, he shrank from contact with that Holy Being in whose nostrils sin is an intolerable stench.

This is what keeps so many men away from the house of God. This is why the drunkard, the gambler, the whoremonger, the forger, the swindler, the demagogue, the ballot-box stuffer, and the political trader do not come to the Lord's sanctuary. They have no fellowship with God, and they do not care to go where they will be reminded of him. Such alienation from God in this world will ripen into an everlasting separation.

My impenitent friend, the voice of God to you to-day is, "Come unto me. Come and abide with me, and I will be a Father to you, and will bestow upon you a heritage of everlasting blessedness." But your response is, "No; I will not come. Depart from me." By and by there will be a day when God will cease to invite you, and when he will turn upon you with words borrowed from your own lips, "Depart from me." From that hour between him and you there will be "a great gulf fixed." Then will come the "horror of great darkness," and the wail of woe to which no voice of pity will ever respond.

I have presented a frightful picture of the present condition of the ungodly man. That picture is not overdrawn. No mathematician can calculate and

no figures can express the magnitude of the sinner's indebtedness to divine justice. Worse than his indebtedness is the slavery into which he has sold himself. All this debt and bondage and degradation have so alienated his heart from God that he will not have God in all his thoughts. What shall we say to those of whom this is a truthful picture? Shall we tell them that they are beyond the orbit of hope? Shall we tell them that there is no eye to pity and no arm to save men who have fallen so low?

No, no! Thanks be to God, it is our great privilege and our unspeakable joy to tell them of One "able also to save them unto the uttermost." God's infinite mercy has provided for them a great Debt-payer who is competent to meet all of their obligations to divine law.

What is the significance of such words as these: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust"; "he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin"; "who died for us"; "in due time Christ died for the ungodly"; "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree"?

The obvious and unmistakable meaning of these scriptures is that Jesus Christ became our substitute, that he took our place under the law of God and met

all of its demands against us, that by the sacrifice of himself he paid all of man's indebtedness to eternal justice.

Having accomplished all this by his atoning work, he is now "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Mark the condition—"to every one that believeth." Christ died for you, but his death availeth nothing on your behalf until you believe. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," and "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Lift your eyes to-day to him who sits yonder on the great white throne of justice and mercy, and let this be your prayer: "O righteous Judge, my debt is infinite, and I have nothing with which to pay even a fraction of it. My plea, my only plea, is that Jesus paid it all—all the debt I owe." Do this, and up there where the records are kept, God will say to his registering angel, "That man's account is settled. Let it so appear in the book of remembrance."

But the great salvation revealed to us in Jesus Christ provides not only for the obliteration of our debts, but for our freedom also from the love and power of sin. The same mercy which pays the debt will bestow the freedom; the same love that

saves us from hell will prepare us for heaven. Every true believer in Jesus Christ has received a new birth. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new."

When you think of the degradation and wretchedness from which men are saved, and the dignity, freedom, purity, happiness, and glory to which they are lifted by God's great scheme of redemption, can you doubt the reality of what the Scriptures call "the joy of salvation"? Can you wonder that redeemed men rend the air with shouts of gladness? Can you wonder that these Christian sanctuaries resound with hosannas and hallelujahs? Can you wonder that men to whom this great salvation has come would

> Soar and touch the heavenly strings
> And vie with Gabriel while he sings
> In notes almost divine.

XII

LESSONS FROM A CONVERTED HARLOT

"To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Luke 7 : 47.

One of the greatest of our Lord's discourses was listened to by a despised outcast. Her reputation was bad enough, but her character was worse. A rich Pharisee, who heard the same sermon invited the Master and his disciples to dine with him, and the invitation was promptly accepted.

The guilty woman was profoundly stirred by the Saviour's gracious invitations and promises. All that was left in her of moral sense was aroused and active. She was so absorbed in what she had heard, and her heart was so full of penitence for sin, and of gratitude to him who had spoken such merciful words to the sinful and degraded, that when our Lord and his disciples went into the Pharisee's house she unconsciously followed them. When Jesus sat at the table she crawled to his feet, clasped them with her hands, and bathed them with

her tears. Not content with this expression of gratitude and affection, she took a fragrant oil which she had been accustomed to use in her wicked vocation, and poured it upon the Saviour's feet.

The Pharisee was greatly offended by our Lord's toleration of this woman's attentions. He said within himself, "If he were what he professes to be, he would know who this woman is and would not allow her to touch him."

It was nothing to this Pharisee that the woman was penitent, that she had abandoned her unclean habits, and that her tears were expressive of her gratitude to him whose merciful words had led her into a better life. He could see only the fact that Jesus had violated a conventional regulation which made it improper for a Jew to be touched by an impure person.

That Pharisee was a typical character. He was a representative of a class whose name is legion. I know men who would be shocked at the sight of a violation of a church canon, but who would bet on a horse race without any disturbance of their moral sensibility. I know men who think I am very profane because I do not lift my hat when I pass a church that has a cross on its steeple, but whose consciences give them no trouble when they swindle the public treasury or buy votes at a political election. Nothing is more despicable in the eyes of

right-minded men, and nothing more offensive to God than a merely technical, ceremonial, and conventional piety. The Bible gives us the true test of godliness when it says, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous."

Jesus explained to the Pharisee the conduct of this woman. She had been a great sinner, and she was deeply conscious of the fact. She felt that she had been the guiltiest of the guilty and the vilest of the vile. But knowing her sins to be forgiven, she was overcome with the sense of divine compassion and mercy. The pouring out of the aromatic oil upon the feet of her Redeemer was her heart's loving tribute to his condescending goodness. She loved and adored him in proportion to the guilt which he had removed from her troubled spirit.

From the conduct of this penitent, believing, and grateful woman, so strongly commended by our Divine Teacher, we derive lessons of pre-eminent value.

1. It is good for any one to have a deep and painful experience of personal guilt. If a man has passed through a spiritual struggle which made him feel the power of evil in his own heart, and revealed to him not only the hatefulness but the destructiveness of sin; if he has been made to see himself in the grasp of the mighty Apollyon, and to realize his nearness to the gates of hell—great will be his

appreciation of God's grace, and great will be his gratitude and love, when he is conscious that divine forgiveness and redemption have been bestowed upon him. No man who has a wrong conception of sin can have a right conception of grace. Our appreciation of God's forgiving mercy is in proportion to our conviction of sin and our consciousness of the peril from which we have been saved.

There is great advantage in having a deep conviction of our depravity and sin. A shallow sense of personal guilt makes a shallow Christian character. A profound sense of moral turpitude will produce a corresponding sense of obligation to God. But just at this point we are in danger of falling into a serious and fatal error. It is not uncommon to hear some one say, "I do not feel my sinfulness so keenly as I ought to feel it. I cannot become a Christian until I am more deeply convicted. I am praying and waiting for more remorse of conscience." Such a person will linger for months and months, and year after year, on the threshold of the kingdom, hoping and waiting for an experience that will make him more worthy of God's forgiving and saving grace.

This is a fearful mistake. What is conviction of sin good for but to help one to turn from sin, and to seek pardon of him whose prerogative it is to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin.

If your conviction is deep enough to make you desire to be a better man, begin with that. Is it strong enough to take you to God in prayer? Begin with that. If you honestly desire to live under the dominion of higher principles, motives, and feelings, begin with that. Begin with what you have, and as you go forward in the path of obedience your moral sense will grow stronger, and your conviction of sin will become deeper and more intense. There is not an old Christian in this community who will not tell you that his sense of sin and his consciousness of personal unworthiness, are many thousand fathoms deeper to-day than they were when he began to follow Christ. These experiences will intensify as you go on in the divine life. Your conceptions of the vast accumulation of personal guilt from which God's mercy has relieved you, will enlarge, day by day, up to your last hour.

2. Another lesson taught us by the conduct of this converted harlot is, that pre-eminently wicked persons, when converted, ought to be pre-eminently earnest and active Christians. By this remark I do not mean that those who have been moral from childhood should not be conspicuously useful Christians. I mean that there are special reasons why men who have been shamefully and notoriously wicked, should be zealous workers in the vineyard of the Lord.

Great wickedness is usually indicative of great natural strength somewhere. Men given to great dissipation have strong passions. Cruel and brutal men have usually marked ability in some direction. Strength and violent wickedness go together, except where wickedness takes the form of meanness.

I have great hopes of a man who sometimes gets on a desperate spree, has a fight or two, and comes out of his debauch hatless, coatless, bruised, and bloody. If you can get him from under the damning despotism of drink there are elements of power in him that may be developed into greatness. Hundreds of such men have been lifted out of the pit and have become heroes for truth and God on a thousand battlefields. Murphy, Gough, and Sam Jones, in their earlier years, belonged to the most degraded and desperate class of drunkards. But when God broke the fetters of their bondage and set them free, they became Christian athletes, and the bravest of leaders in Christian warfare.

But for the man whose depravity sinks into meanness there is scarcely any hope. When a man permits me to meet pecuniary obligations for him which he is amply able to provide for, when his selfishness culminates in dishonesty and rascality, I consider his case about hopeless.

Usually, where there is great power displayed in wrong-doing there is great power to react from

wrong and to move in the opposite direction. If a man has been going away from God with gigantic energy and force, when he turns he ought to come back with something like the same determination, vigor, and impetuosity. The world expects one who has defied and outraged the public conscience to be brave and enthusiastic as a Christian when he is converted from the error of his way.

It is very pitiful to see a man who was once valiant for Satan timid and cowardly in the service of God. Passion is doing its legitimate work only when it impels us in the path of duty. Its function is to go behind conscience, faith, and love, and make them potential and fruitful. When a notoriously wicked man is converted we expect him to be noteworthily good. One whose associations have long been with bad men is in possession of knowledge which he ought to use in the cause of truth and virtue. If a man has been rescued from drunkenness he has an experience which qualifies him for being very serviceable in delivering others from the grasp of the merciless fiend. He knows the pangs of an unnatural and direful thirst. He knows what it is to sell the shelter over the heads of dependent and helpless children. He knows what it is to mortgage even the marriage ring, placed upon the finger of a loving wife as a token and reminder of plighted vows. He knows what it is to hear a child cry for

bread when there is not a morsel of meal in the barrel. He knows what it is to feel slimy vipers crawling over his flesh, and to see a thousand furies whirling before him. When that man is redeemed by the grace of God from the despotism of alcohol he is in possession of a knowledge which qualifies him to be an apostle of temperance.

Gambling is worse than drunkenness. It sends its ruthless plowshare through a family until the wife is a ragged beggar on the streets, and the daughters sell themselves into disgrace, and the sons grow up to be thieves and outlaws. The gambler is unrestrained by any influence. The sweet calls of love bound back from his iron soul, and all endearments and tender ties are consumed in the flame of his devilish passion.

I rejoice to know that it is possible for a gambler even to be saved. When man comes out from such a bondage into the liberty and blessedness of the kingdom of God, who can estimate his power for good? What a weight of obligation is upon him! With what fervid zeal and supernal eloquence he ought to plead with men who are the slaves of the same tyrant that once dragged him through the mire and filth of degradation and wickedness.

What a pitiable conception some people have of Christian life! They think of a Christian as one who has been cleansed like a garment that has

passed through a laundry. Divinely washed and polished, he is hung up in the Lord's wardrobe, where no smoke nor dust of earth can get at him. Some of our churches are dying from an excess of these wardrobe Christians.

When a man is called out of a worldly and wicked life he is called to work; he is called to war; he is called to suffer; he is called to go out into the lanes and alleys and down into the slums and rescue the fallen and perishing.

When a man is converted—truly converted—and looks with an enlightened conscience and a glorified understanding along his past life, if he has been very wicked, how wonderful to him must be the mercy of God! When the prodigal son, who had squandered all his substance in riotous living and sunk to companionship with the swine, got back to the old homestead and felt his father's arms entwined about his neck, and saw the feast that had been prepared for the celebration of his return, how wonderful to him were his father's love and goodness.

If you feel that you have been "snatched as a brand from the burning," it will be pleasing to God and profitable to you to sit down again and again and meditate upon the mercy that saved you from a terrible doom.

I carry in my bosom to-day a secret concerning a man which, if I should reveal it, would make him,

his children, and his children's children infamous in the eyes of the world. Of that dark deed I know that he has repented a thousand times. If tears of blood are possible to mortals they have fallen from his eyes. God has forgiven him, but he has never forgiven himself. The recollection of his crime and the realization of God's pardoning mercy have made him not only one of the humblest of men, but one of the most zealous of Christian workers. He feels that he has been the chief of sinners, that his salvation was God's greatest miracle of mercy, and that nothing less than a martyr's zeal will express his sense of obligation and the depth of his gratitude.

Shame on the man who is content to be a dwarf among Christians after he has been a giant among sinners. Shame on the man who, after having been a master workman in the kingdom of Satan, prefers to be a drone and an idler in the kingdom of Christ.

When a man who has fought under the banner of sedition and treason has been pardoned for his crime and restored to the fellowship and confidence of his fellow-countrymen, so far from being ashamed of his nation's flag, he delights to stand beneath its folds, and bear it aloft as the symbol of the security and freedom which he enjoys.

Are there not some here to-day who, though they

claim to have received pardon from God for their numberless transgressions of his holy law, are ashamed to put on the Christian's uniform and march behind the flag of the divine Captain of their salvation? They are ashamed to step before this multitude and say, "Jesus Christ is my Redeemer and my Master." They cherish the hope of endless blessedness up yonder, where the flowers never wither and the rainbow never fades, but they will make no public confession of him whose love and mercy have kindled that precious hope in their sinful breasts.

O thou ungrateful recipient of divine mercy, will you carry your religion as you carry a dark lantern, and use it as a light only to your own feet? After a life in which you have done and suffered nothing for Christ, will he meet you at the gate of heaven and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant"? Do you expect that after such a life is over, your friends will write upon your tombstone, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them"?

3. We learn from the example of this converted harlot how to perpetuate our names and influence in the world. What we do for ourselves in the gratification of worldly pride and ambition shall perish, but what we do for Christ will live forever.

Great scientific specialists, who have spent their lives in the study of Egyptian relics, tell us that the pyramids are monuments to Egyptian kings. But who built them? We do not know. We shall never know. For whom were they built? We do not know; we shall never know. Their whole history is an obscuration and a mystery.

There were men in Thebes, Tyre, and Babylon, who strove for earthly immortality, but they are forgotten. Not so with the humble woman whose conduct has furnished the theme for this occasion. The tears which she shed, and the precious oil which she poured upon the feet of Jesus, will cause her name to be held in everlasting remembrance.

There have been more brilliant women than Florence Nightingale, but none whose memory is more fragrant, and whose influence for good is more potent and enduring. Millions of men who had more genius than Adoniram Judson are forgotten, but his name and deeds will go down to the latest generation.

Up yonder, in the temple of heaven, the names of all who have lived, labored, and suffered for Christ, are inscribed in letters of living light, and there they will appear, to the eyes of admiring millions, when every monument of earth has perished back to dust, and the sun himself has grown dim with age.

XIII

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

"When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." Matt. 2 : 10.

GREAT historical critics and chronological experts assure us that Jesus Christ was not born on the twenty-fifth day of December, but at some time during the latter part of the spring. If it were definitely known that he was born on the twenty-fifth day of December there is nothing in the Scriptures to warrant the special observance of the day. There is no more divine authority for the observance of it than there is for the celebration of St. Patrick's Day. According to the Scriptures the Sabbath is the only day which we are required to observe differently from other days. But while we care nothing for the day upon which Christ was born, the fact of his birth and the signs and wonders attending it are worthy of eternal celebration.

If the death of Christ is a great mystery, his birth is a greater one. A great writer says: "In my wondering I can scarcely get past his cradle to wonder at his cross."

I am not surprised that the birth of such a being was signalized by supernatural phenomena. If at his death the earth trembled, the veil of the temple was rent, and the sun refused to shine, we should not think it strange that at his birth a star rolled up the eastern sky and stood over his cradle, while a great multitude of the heavenly host sang, "Glory to God in the highest!"

The magi were the astronomers and astrologers of Persia and Babylonia. They read the secrets of the earth in the movements of the stars. They interpreted the appearance of the new star which they had seen to mean the birth of a great king, and some of them set out toward Jerusalem to find him. They went to that city and inquired for him, but he was not there. As they departed from Jerusalem, the star which they had seen in the east went before them and stood over Bethlehem, Judea, and there they found the infant Christ.

Some scientists have tried to explain away the supernatural features of this astronomical wonder. Kepler attempted this as far back as 1630. He referred to the fact that in the year when our Lord was born there were three conjunctions of the planets Jupiter and Saturn. The first occurred in May, the second in October, and the third in November. He thinks that the astrology-loving magi may have connected these conjunctions of the planets with the

birth of a Jewish king. He supposes that after the May conjunction they set out on their journey to Jerusalem, and when they reached that city they saw the October or November conjunction, either of which, at certain hours, would have been in the direction of Bethlehem.

Dr. John A. Broadus, in his great commentary on Matthew, disposes of Kepler's theory by simply reminding us that the Greek word here is *aster*, a star, and not *astron*, a group of stars, and that the two planets could not have had the appearance of a single star, because they were never nearer to each other than one degree, a distance which is equal to twice the diameter of the moon.

Luteroth attempts to get rid of the miracle by saying that there are variable stars—stars which, after being invisible for a long time, reappear, and that such a disappearing and reappearing star was probably seen by the magi. This theory is irreconcilable with the words of the Scriptures, "The star went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was."

If a natural star went before or in advance of the magi from Jerusalem it was certainly in advance of them when they reached Bethlehem. The language of the sacred historian is, that "the star stood over where the young child was." If we believe this statement we are compelled to believe that the star

and its movements through the heavens constituted a miracle, and that God wrought such a miracle to emphasize the dignity and divinity of the character and mission of the child Jesus.

When the magi saw the star going before them toward Bethlehem, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." As astronomers they were happy over a phenomenon which marked an era in the progress of their science. They rejoiced because they believed that they were about to witness the fulfillment of the prophecies which they had made in their own country when they first saw this new luminary in the heavens.

It is recorded that when they found the child Jesus "they worshiped him." Evidently they did not worship him as a divine being, because they had then no true conception of his character and mission. They did homage to him as an infant king—as one who was destined to wield a mighty scepter and exert a commanding influence upon surrounding kingdoms.

If those heathen astrologers, with their crude ideas of the mission of this wonderful child, rejoiced over his advent, how much greater should be our joy, knowing him to be the long-promised Messiah, the Divine Redeemer of sinful and lost humanity, and the Almighty Ruler of a spiritual kingdom against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

That miraculous luminary which guided the magi to the manger was symbolic of the exalted mission of him whose advent it announced. In the Scriptures he is called "the star that should come out of Jacob," and also "the bright and morning star."

There is nothing that we contemplate with more curiosity and wonder than a star shining in the far-away depths of ether. The person who wrote—

> Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
> How I wonder what you are;
> Up above the world so high,
> Like a diamond in the sky,

expressed something deeper than the thought of a child. The greatest astronomer of this age, when looking through the mightiest telescope upon one of those distant orbs, can scarcely refrain from exclaiming, in the language of the child song, "How I wonder what you are!" The more he beholds it, studies it, measures it, the more the wonder grows.

An old prophet who foresaw the advent of the Messiah said, "His name shall be called Wonderful." In our spiritual infancy we marveled at the wisdom of Jesus, and at every act that he performed in his great drama of redemption. We were amazed at his gentleness, meekness, forbearance, condescension, goodness, and mercy. After years of meditation upon these things, we realize

that they have grown a thousand-fold more wonderful to our spiritual eyes.

That little fixed star shining off yonder in the depths of space is an object of wonder, but if you should take wings and fly a few thousand times the distance of the earth from the sun nearer to it, how much greater it would seem to be than it now appears. There you could tarry and spend a lifetime in studying features of it you never saw before. But suppose you were a million times that distance nearer to it than now, how would it impress you? You would be so overwhelmed with the vastness and glory of it, that all earlier conceptions of it would vanish from your mind.

As we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ," he is magnified before our spiritual vision. The nearer we get to him by faith and love and fellowship, the more immeasurable and ineffable to our souls are the heights and depths of his adorable perfections.

When Paul was in the flesh he was wont to write about the length and breadth and depth of the love of Christ. I wonder what he would write now, after a residence of eighteen hundred years in heaven? In these earthly sanctuaries we listen with rapturous appreciation to the music of the old masters which celebrates the birth of Jesus; but who can conceive of the higher heights of song into

which their music-loving spirits soar to-day, as they stand in the immediate presence of the glorified Christ and look back to that advent scene in the manger of Bethlehem?

Jesus is compared to a star because he is the guide of his people. Some years ago, while on a hunting expedition with some friends, night overtook us in the depths of a pathless wilderness. We were lost, and the experience was an exceedingly sad one. After discussing our situation for some time, the leader of our party said, "Look for the north star." We did look for it, and soon found it; and with that for our guide, we made our way out of the wilderness to the point from which we had started. How many a storm-tossed mariner has blessed God for the polar star! Before the invention of the compass, how many a vessel, guided by that star, shunned the hidden rocks and dangerous coasts, outrode the tempest, and came safely into port.

In the moral and spiritual world Christ is the infallible guide. To follow him is to walk in paths of pleasantness and peace. To be guided by him is to escape the wrath to come, to live in fellowship with God, and to secure for ourselves an eternal heritage of blessedness beyond the tomb. To make his will the law of our lives, is to attain to the noblest manhood, to enrich the generation in

which we live, and to leave behind us a name and an influence that shall descend as a precious legacy to coming generations.

Christ taught certain great ethical principles which should underlie all political government. Any nation whose government disregards these principles will sooner or later disintegrate and perish. That the government of this country is drifting farther and farther away from the eternal laws of rectitude embodied in Christ's Sermon on the Mount, is evident to every observant and thoughtful man among us. The supreme question with the average American legislator is not, What is right? but, What is expedient? In his political creed there is no place for the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule.

To the guilty soul, conscious of its peril and wrestling with the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Christ is the only infallible guide. He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." That is a truth as old as the hills; but to those of you who know it by actual experience it is eternally new and precious.

> Oh, where shall rest be found,
> Rest for the weary soul?

Some of you remember when these words expressed the profoundest longing of your being.

You remember when you wandered everywhere in search of spiritual peace, and did not find it. You looked for it in science; it was not there. You looked for it amid the mazes of human philosophy; it was not there. You looked for it in the beautiful, in music and painting, in landscape loveliness and sunset halos; it was not there. You turned your eyes within and looked for it in your own ruined nature; it was not there.

When you were on the verge of despair, when neither light nor comfort came from any source, and you felt that you were of all men most miserable, you heard through some messenger of God the words of the pitying Christ: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

You hearkened to his voice; you came into his presence weary, and worn, and sad, and looking up into his face with aspirations which your own poor words could not express, you simply said, "Lord, help me," and in response to this plea, the blessed Saviour looked upon you, and there came into your life, for the first time, the light and bliss for which you sighed.

Christ is called the Morning Star because he is the forerunner of peace and joy. He is like the orb which heralded to the wise men of the East his own coming into the world.

My friend, has Christ come to you? If he has, put on the garment of praise and lift up your voice in a song of triumph, because his coming means cleansing, pardon, freedom, resurrection, ascension, coronation, and everlasting life in that better land where "eternal day excludes the night and pleasures banish pain."

Has he come to your family? Has he bestowed upon your sons and daughters the spirit of adoption? If he has, domestic purity, tranquillity, and happiness here and everlasting reunion in "the land that is fairer than day," shall be the portion of your cup.

When Jesus was born the angels sang, "On earth peace, good will toward men." That was a prophecy of the glory that shall be revealed in the latter day, when all nations shall bow before him; when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, when wars shall cease from pole to pole, and every man shall love his neighbor as himself.

In most of us, Christmas will serve to revive many tender memories, memories that will "bring the light of other days around us." It is a time when tears will come even amid scenes of gayety and mirth. Our eyes fall upon some object in the household which reminds us of loved ones vanished out of sight. It may be a picture on the wall; it may be a book; it may be an old family clock; it

may be our mother's chair. Long live the name of that gifted woman who wrote "The Old Arm Chair":

I love it, I love it, and who shall dare
To chide me, for loving the old arm chair?
I've treasured it long as a sainted prize,
I've bedewed it with tears and embalmed it with sighs.
'Tis bound by a thousand bands to my heart;
Not a tie will break, not a link will start.
Would you learn the spell? A mother sat there;
And a sacred thing is that old arm chair.

In childhood's hour I lingered near
The hallowed seat with list'ning ear;
And the gentle words that mother would give,
To fit me to die and teach me to live!
She told me that shame would never betide,
With truth for my creed and God for my guide;
She taught me to lisp my earliest prayer,
As I knelt beside that old arm chair.

I sat and watched her many a day,
When her eyes were dim and her locks were gray;
And I almost worshiped her when she smiled,
And turned from the Bible to bless her child.
Years rolled on, but at last one sped—
My idol was shattered—my earth-star fled;
I learned how much the heart can bear,
When I saw her die in that old arm chair.

'Tis past! 'Tis past! But I gaze on it now,
With quivering breath and throbbing brow;
'Twas there she nursed me; 'twas there she died;
And memory flows with a lava tide.

Say it is folly and deem me weak,
While the scalding tears run down my cheek ;
But I love it, I love it, and cannot tear
My soul from my mother's old arm chair.

It may not be your mother's chair, but your father's Bible, that has turned your thoughts backward to the old homestead and the scenes of your childhood. That old faded book, from which he was wont to read the sweet promises of God ere he bowed his knees to commend his household to the Lord's guiding and keeping care, will be to you the most precious of all the books. That book was the companion of your father's best and holiest hours. It was that which made him the saintly man he was. As his steps tottered in the advancing pilgrimage of life, and his eyes grew dim with age, dearer and dearer to him were the well-worn pages of that ancient book. One morning, just as the stars were fading into the dawn of a beautiful and serene Sabbath, the aged pilgrim passed on beyond the stars and beyond the morning, and entered into "the rest that remaineth to the people of God."

But, beloved, when we have looked back and shed tears of affection for the dear ones gone from the circle of home, let us look forward and upward, where he whose birth we celebrate to-day has gone to prepare for us a resting-place, a place

Where those who meet shall part no more,
And those long parted meet again.

Let us look above to the realm where the rainbow never fadeth, where the flowers never wither, where the fountains never cease to flow, and where beauty smiles eternally, and pleasure never dies.

XIV

THE GREATNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

"Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Matt. 11 : 11.

THE wisest man on earth is liable to mislead us in estimating the character and worth of another; but Jesus Christ, who was too wise to err and too holy to deceive, could not mislead us. He has placed John the Baptist on the loftiest pinnacle of human greatness. Every well-meaning and virtuous person to whom I speak to-day aspires to greatness; but your aspirations are worthless unless you have right conceptions of greatness. How blest we are in having before us on these sacred pages a model of greatness which has the unqualified endorsement of the highest wisdom of the universe!

Let us bring to the study of this great man the inspiration of a virtuous ambition. Let us see if there was not something in him which we may reproduce in ourselves. Let us at least determine to so truly comprehend this divinely approved model

that hereafter we may know greatness when we see it.

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, when the universal Jewish heart was aflame with hatred of Roman tyranny and with desire of deliverance from it, when the voice of no living prophet had been heard during a period of four hundred and fifty years, when religion existed only in forms that were as dead as the grave, when the despotism and cruelty of civil governors were equaled only by the hypocrisies and vices of the priests of the temple and synagogue, just six months before the manifestation of the Saviour of the world, this strange, stalwart preacher came forth from a mountain wilderness, and in a voice that vibrated the air like the blast of a brazen trumpet, exclaimed, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Let us consider first the essential elements of John's greatness. He was great in everything which enters into real manhood.

Physically he had the vitality, vigor, and strength of an athlete. He had kept himself as pure as the air he breathed. His manly form was untouched by vice. He knew not the taste of any food which men call luxury. His great iron will was master of every appetite and impulse of his animal nature. He had spent years in developing his physical constitution under the most favorable conditions. He

had strengthened his limbs and hardened his muscles by climbing steep and rugged mountains. He had expanded his lungs and enriched his blood by inhaling freely the purest mountain atmosphere. He had disciplined his voice until it was deep as distant thunder and shrill and clear as the bugle's blast. To a man who is called to lead in any great reformation, nothing is more essential than a physical constitution of exceptional strength and endurance. He needs it for self-protection when some ruffian opposes his argument with a club. Without it he is in danger of prostration and collapse at times when his presence and voice are most needed.

What would have become of that great reformation immediately preceding the manifestation of Christ if its success had depended upon a man of ordinary physical capacity? In that mighty religious movement which convulsed and subdued all "Jerusalem, Judea, and the region round about Jordan," there was but one person to preach and baptize. Who but a man of John's bodily strength and toughness could have endured the strain? Oh, that there were more muscularity in the manhood of the Christian ministry of our day!

John was intellectually great. Nature endowed him with faculties which, when developed, were capable of gigantic feats. It is apparent that his mind was superbly disciplined and stored with

knowledge. He had evidently acquired all the learning of the most cultured classes of the Jews. The whole history of Israel, and the wisdom of her patriarchs, rulers, and prophets were as familiar to him as the alphabet of the language he spoke.

He had spent not less than twenty-five years in preparing himself for a ministry that lasted but little more than six months. The greatest work of every man who truly enriches the world is his preparation for service. If I had only seven days more of life I would spend six of them in study and prayer and the other in preaching the everlasting gospel. In God's vineyard it is not the amount of labor performed by his servants, but the quality of it that tells upon the characters and destinies of men.

To such knowledge as John had acquired from communion with books he added the fruits of many years of original thinking. Under the stimulus of the inspiring scenery about him and the electrifying grandeur of the sacred and momentous mission for which he was fitting himself, his naturally great mind penetrated and mastered problems untouched by any of his illustrious predecessors. I suppose it was his unrivaled originality of thought and speech that Jesus referred to when he said that John was "more than a prophet."

He was great in tender, generous, and noble

affections. In some of the old paintings he has the appearance of a wild, fierce, vindictive, selfish, and savage man. This conception is grossly erroneous and unjust. While he had the courage of a lion, he was as tender as a woman. Unconquerable and unyielding in his purposes, he was also as humble and teachable as a child. In the zenith of his power and fame we hear him speaking of One to come after him the latchet of whose shoes he was unworthy to unloose.

He was great in his spiritual development. He endured and labored "as seeing him who is invisible." To him God was an ever-present reality. He saw him in all the shifting panorama of earth and sky. He heard his voice in the roaring wrath of every passing storm and in the cheerful notes of every singing bird. He felt his power in the shock of every earthquake and in every quiet pulsation of his own heart. Disciplined into the most exquisite sensibility to spiritual things, he recognized the presence of the Saviour at the Jordan before his natural eyes had beheld him. You remember that he said to the multitude gathered there, "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not."

To these attributes and attainments of his physical, intellectual, and spiritual nature were superadded in a pre-eminent degree, the influences of the Holy Spirit. His whole spiritual being was divinely in-

habited, divinely illumined, and divinely empowered. This gave the crowning glory to his manhood. It was this that enabled him to come to his difficult work with more than the power and spirit of Elijah.

John the Baptist was a man, in the highest sense, before he was a preacher. This is God's order, and our disregard of it has let into the pulpit thousands of ecclesiastical parvenus, dudes, and dead-beats.

You cannot build a palace out of straw. You cannot paint a great and enduring picture with mud. You cannot develop a toad into a nightingale, nor a snail into a race horse. It takes something more than a mere human biped to make a jurist, or a statesman, or a preacher. It takes a man. That creature on the bench who like necessity knows no law, or who, if he knows it, is morally incapable of an impartial administration of it, is not a judge. Why? Because he is not a man. That individual who goes to the ballot box and votes for what he knows to be an unpatriotic and unrighteous measure, is not an American citizen. Why? Because he is not a man. He is a mere chattel that is always ready to be put on the market and sold.

That something up there in the pulpit, in clerical attire of the most approved and conventional pattern, that mild-mannered, soft-toned, and timid creature, who straddles every question that agitates the community and who makes no issue with the

forces of evil, is not a preacher. He is no mouthpiece for God. Why? Because he is destitute of the most essential elements of true manhood. He is a mere pulpit automaton or weathercock, whose movements are directed by those from whom he receives his pay.

Let us consider, in the next place, some of the exhibitions of John's greatness.

His greatness was seen in his manifest indifference to the voice of detraction and calumny. He came to the work of preaching unheralded and unknown. Obscure in his origin, a denizen of the wilderness, untaught by the doctors of the law, what claims had he as a public teacher of men? That he was sneered at is implied in a question which Jesus put to the multitude, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?" That evidently was their first conception of John. They regarded him as a mere upstart, a breeder of cheap sensations, a fluttering thing in the air that would soon exhaust itself and disappear.

We infer from another question which Jesus asked them, that they had done more than sneer at the wilderness preacher. They had maliciously slandered him. They had charged him with working for selfish ends. "What went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold they that wear soft clothing are in king's houses."

John was unmoved and undisturbed by these foolish and slanderous criticisms. Conscious of his strength and the rectitude of his motives, he continued to declare the message of God to the people, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

From still another question propounded by our Lord to the same multitude, we infer that John's critics finally changed their minds. "But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet." This, my friends, is substantially the history of every true reformer in religion, or philosophy, or science, or politics. He is at first looked upon as an upstart, a maker of cheap notoriety, a sensation that will live only for a day. By and by those who have laughed at him will become serious. Yes, they will get mad, and say, "He is a rascal. He is morally rotten. He is working for money, or office." Still later, when they see that they have accomplished nothing by their unrighteous abuse, they get over their madness, and say, "Well, is he not a prophet indeed! Yea, he is more than a prophet. We never saw his equal."

O ye prophets, ye reformers, ye men of real merit and high resolves, destined to power and fame, do not be afraid of your traducers. Do not be frightened by the newspapers. They will belittle you to-day and magnify you to-morrow. They will

curse you to-day and crown you to-morrow. They called Napoleon a pretender, a Corsican, and a thief, but, a little later, they put the imperial coronet on his brow and shouted, "Long live Napoleon!"

If your cause is just, your motive pure, and you are conscious of capacity to compass the object you have in view, do not fear the critics. Hold on, John the Baptist! Let your truth-proclaiming voice ring out in trumpet tones through all the wilderness of error and corruption, and by and by the critics will cease their fruitless carpings, and from every housetop proclaim you "a prophet, and more than a prophet."

John's greatness was felt in the attractive and transforming power of his preaching. The people who heard him were shaken as by an earthquake. The scales fell from their eyes, and in deep penitence of soul they were baptized in Jordan confessing their sins. Every new trophy of his power was "a fresh evangel of his fame." Tidings of the preacher and his work were carried from Jordan to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem to every nook and corner of Judea. Soon every highway and path was thronged with pilgrims, pressing on with eager and impatient desire to see and hear this mighty prophet of God, whose wonderful words were reviving the dead hopes of a people from whose temple the Shekinah had disappeared, and upon whose necks the

galling yoke of Roman despotism seemed to be riveted forever.

In modern parlance, John's preaching would be called "sensational." It was sensational, and yet in every particular it was legitimate preaching. In every act of his wonder-working ministry he was obedient to the will of God. He said and did only what he was divinely commissioned to say and do.

He held with unflinching fealty to the task which he was appointed to perform, the preparation of a people for the Lord. The sensation attending his ministry resulted from no studied eccentricity of manner, or impassioned appeals to the prejudices of men, but from the nature of the message which he bore, and the deep earnestness with which he applied it to the hearts and consciences of his auditors.

Martin Luther was sensational, but who will say that he was unlawfully so? How could such a man, acting in a crisis so momentous, and speaking for a cause so transcendently great, avoid sensation? Chrysostom, Savonarola, Knox, and Whitefield were sensational; and so are all the men of our day who are wise, consecrated, and successful leaders of spiritual warfare.

John's greatness was seen again in the righteous audacity and dauntless courage with which he smote iniquity in high places. When the religious aristocracy, which constituted the high-church party

of Judea, came out to hear him, they supposed that he would be profoundly impressed by the compliment which their presence bestowed upon him. They imagined that he would recognize in a befitting manner their condescending kindness, that he would repay them by giving them reserved seats, and by telling them that they were too refined, holy, and exalted, to be touched by the vulgar common people, and by the unwashed and uncircumcised sinners gathered about them.

They were sorely disappointed. Seeing their pride, insincerity, and hypocrisy, knowing how they were attempting to conceal by a robe of sanctity the dishonesty and sensuality of their lives, he assailed them with a righteous fury that was simply appalling. "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father, for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

The veriest coward and time-server who has "stolen the livery of the court of heaven to serve the devil in," can rebuke the sins and vices of the poor and obscure of his community; but to face the dwellers in mansions, the wearers of soft raiment, the social and religious aristocracy, who claim a monopoly of intelligence, refinement, respectability,

and virtue, and tell them of their sins and their vices and their shams, and paint the horrors of the pit into which their feet are sliding, is a task which requires the faith, courage, and strength of a spiritual athlete.

John the Baptist was a Christian radical. To say that of any man is to pay the very highest tribute to his personal character. He laid the axe to the root of the tree saying, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Sometimes he arraigned whole classes of men, uncovered their iniquities, and foretold their doom. At other times he pointed to some individual sinner, unmasked him, and held up his deeds of darkness to public reprobation and scorn. Inspired by the consciousness that he was the oracle of the living God, and regardless of consequences to himself, he dared to confront the royal Herod, who had Roman legions at his back, and solemnly rebuke him for his adulterous connection with the wife of his own living brother.

If a man is inherently great God will not let him die until he has had some opportunity to show it. Demosthenes had his opportunity. When he entered the arena of public affairs in Athens the State was a wreck; public virtue was at the lowest ebb; the laws had lost their authority; the austerity of the earlier manhood had yielded to the inroads of

luxury; activity had succumbed to indolence, and probity to venality. Of all the virtues of their forefathers there remained to the Athenians naught save an enthusiastic attachment to their native soil, a passionate and undying affection for a country the possession of which even the gods had contested.

It was in exciting and intensifying this feeling that Demosthenes climbed to the pinnacle of oratorical fame. He knew the ambitious designs of Philip of Macedon. He felt that there was but one hope for Athens, and that was in war. This was the one theme of his orations and the one object of his public career—war, war with Philip, the Macedonian despot and robber, and for the space of fourteen years did the matchless eloquence of the Athenian orator obstruct the path of the Macedonian conqueror.

Cicero had his opportunity in the conspiracy of Catiline, and wisely and grandly did he use it. Chrysostom had his opportunity when they attempted to banish him for preaching against the licentiousness of the priesthood and the corruptions of the court, and so well did he improve it that the world has applauded him ever since.

Patrick Henry had his opportunity when the repeated outrages of British tyranny made it necessary to kindle the fires of revolution throughout the American Colonies, and so well did he use it that posterity

will never cease to call him "The forest-born Demosthenes."

But "among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." That implies that no man ever used more faithfully, wisely, and successfully the opportunities of his life.

Sometimes we find in a man possessed of that aggressive, impetuous, and vehement spirit so conspicuous in John, a fatal lack of the softer and milder virtues. No man is truly great who is selfish, envious, harsh, and vindictive. No man is great without a good degree of tenderness, pity, modesty, and humility. Every intelligent reader of the New Testament must admit that John had these gentler virtues in a pre-eminent degree.

In the eyes of that admiring throng gathered on the banks of the Jordan, John the Baptist was incomparably greater than any man of his day. But hear him compare himself with another. "One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose."

Picture to your minds, if you can, another scene. Standing before that admiring multitude, he points with his right hand toward a Galilean stranger, and in a voice heavy with the profoundest emotion, utters that exclamation which generations and centuries had listened in vain to hear: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

But how amazement deepens as that stranger, that divine being, God's Messiah, approaches John and asks for baptism at his hands. See the great preacher's head droop and his eyes grow dim with tears. Hear his voice break with emotion as he responds: "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Who can look upon that picture and think that John the Baptist was lacking in tenderness or modesty or humility?

This great man closed his earthly career in a Roman dungeon. Amid the darkness and dreariness of that place he had a brief season of weakness, if to doubt be always a sign of weakness. Surely if a servant of God ever had cause to doubt John had it during his confinement in that prison.

Material environment has much to do with our mental conditions. There is a subtle mystery about atmospheric influences. There are points in space at which we can receive no temptation. There are other points which seem to be hell's favorite battle-fields. That Roman jail was a favorable place for infernal visitations. A man cannot see far in a prison light. He cannot see much with dungeon walls for a horizon. There is not much poetry in a loathsome, vermin-breeding cell. Those massive stone walls, barred windows, iron doors, and stern, sullen Roman sentinels, were not fruitful of holy and comforting suggestion.

Why is John the Baptist in such a place? He has committed no crime; he has violated no law. Why is he there? He is there "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." The iron hand of guilty power is upon him because he dared to rebuke the king for his foul and incestuous marriage. It must have seemed strange indeed to him, that God would permit a servant so innocent and faithful to endure such treatment. Two other facts helped him to doubt. One was that the multitude of people who once crowded around him, admired and applauded him, had forgotten him. The other was that Jesus, whom he heralded and baptized, had never been near him, or even inquired after him, during all the dreary days of his incarceration and suffering. These circumstances conspired to depress John's mind to the point where he could entertain doubts in reference to the character and mission of Jesus.

But his doubts were short-lived. Calling to him two of the few disciples who had clung to him in his distress, he told them to go directly to the Master with this question: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" They did as they were commanded, and the message which they brought back from their divine Lord removed the last doubt from the mind and heart of his imprisoned servant.

Soon after this the end came. It was tragic, bloody, horrible; and yet for him it was glorious. Committing his soul for the last time into the hands of his Heavenly Father, without a tremor, supremely calm in the assurance that death for him would be only transition from gloom to glory, he received the murderous blow which severed his head from his body.

While the crimson tide of life ran over that dungeon floor, and the poor, ghastly, gory head was borne in a vessel to Herod's palace, his freed spirit, unharmed, untouched, peaceful, radiant, triumphant, sped upward to its eternal dwelling-place in the sheltering bosom of God.

Farewell, great prophet. Thou hast left the world laden with the benedictions of grateful hearts. Thy blood is an imperishable seed from which, in every age, a harvest of heroes and martyrs shall spring. The echoes of that voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord," shall live until this wilderness world has become the kingdom of Christ.

Friends, if there be men among us who approximate, in any good degree, the lofty ideal to which I have directed your thoughts this morning, honor them, love them, magnify them, crown them, for they are the hope of your country and the world.

If a pure gospel is to be preached; if spiritual

religion is to be preserved; if the macadamized bigotry of modern Phariseeism is to be pulverized and destroyed; if the soul-degrading infidelity of Ingersoll and his satellites is to be smitten with deadly blows; if communism, socialism, free-love-ism, new-womanism, and all their kindred evils are to be uprooted from American soil; if this disgraceful travesty upon democratic government is ever stopped; if ballot-box stuffing, false registration, and bribery, now practised under the eyes and with the approval of men who claim to be patriots and Christians, are ever abolished; if the despotism of monopoly and privileged classes is ever to be overthrown; if we are ever to repeal those infamous laws which are golden girdles to one class and galling shackles for another; if the power of the whisky ring is ever broken, so that men can be elected to a city council, or to a State legislature, without taking an oath of fealty to the barkeepers; if the church of the living God is ever to be cleansed of her defilements and made worthy to be called the bride of Christ; if these reforms are possible, they are made possible only through the daring and deathless devotion of the few, who are dominated by the same spirit and purposes which made John the Baptist the matchless man and the peerless prophet that he was.

XV

JUDAS, THE TRAITOR

"Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." Acts 1 : 25.

Of all the pictures of the final condition of the wicked, Dante's "*Inferno*" is the blackest and most terrible. In "the place of outer darkness" he sees everything that can contribute to the torture of damned spirits. After making the whole circuit of that vast realm of uncleanness and anguish, he comes at last to the bottom of the nethermost pit. There he finds the worst class of sinners wailing and howling with nameless agony. Chief among them is Satan; and next to him in guilt and woe is Judas Iscariot.

Dante represented the Roman Catholic theology of the Middle Ages, a conspicuous feature of which was the doctrine of a hell of material fire—a hell in which betrayers of Christ and his people are the chief sufferers.

In our day opinion is swinging toward the opposite extreme. The tendency is not only to reject

the material features of the medieval hell, but to reduce sin to a mere imperfection rendered unavoidable by our environment, and future punishment to such pains as are incident to wholesome discipline and preparation for a higher and happier state. To men who hold to such views nothing appears to be very bad. The hypocrites, adulterers, thieves, tyrants, and murderers who have received the world's reprobation, were grossly misunderstood, and were much better men at heart than those who judged and condemned them. They say that Judas Iscariot was not a criminal, but a hero. What seems to us a betrayal of Jesus was in reality an act of friendship, and what appears to be damnable hypocrisy was simply a mistaken method by which Judas attempted to accomplish a great and holy purpose.

These apologists and defenders of the arch-traitor would have us believe that for more than eighteen centuries the world has wronged him by charging that it was for money that he betrayed Jesus to his enemies. They say that the smallness of the sum—only about fifteen dollars in our money—proves that he must have had another and a stronger motive.

They declare also that Judas' conception of the character and mission of Christ did not differ from that of the other apostles. All of them believed him to be the divine Messiah promised in the Jewish Scriptures. They believed that he had come to re-

store the kingdom of Israel, and that he would soon sit upon the throne once occupied by David. The only difference between Judas and his brother apostles was that he was more impatient than they. They trusted Jesus to choose the right time and the right means for the organization of his kingdom, while Judas thought that his delay was unwise and unwarranted. He was disappointed in the Master. He thought that he was lacking in energy and practicality; he was too spiritual and unworldly to be a successful schemer and leader in a great and perilous political movement; he allowed golden opportunities to pass unimproved; his delay had caused the leading men among the Jews to believe that he was destitute of the wisdom and courage requisite to success.

Judas was not only disappointed, but indignant, because Jesus did not proclaim himself king when he was the idol of the populace and could have commanded them for any purpose. He knew that Jesus was invested with divine power. He had seen him heal the sick, cast out devils, quell the storm, and raise the dead. He knew that by the exercise of the same power he could crush all opposition and make himself the world's greatest king. His purpose in betraying him was to compel him to use that power. He intended to bring things to a crisis.

He knew that the chief priests and elders were eagerly watching for an opportunity to destroy

Jesus. He thought that by betraying him into their hands he would put him in a situation that would make it necessary for him to assert his kingship and exercise his divine power. Inspired by this motive, he regarded his treachery as an exhibition of the loftiest virtue, and expected Jesus to reward him for it as soon as he ascended the throne.

The apologists of Judas contend that he meant well from beginning to end, but that he was unwise in the choice of his methods. They say too, that the intensity of his sorrow over his mistake and over the death of the innocent Christ demonstrates that he was not a man of bad heart.

This I believe to be an impartial statement of the position of moderate defenders of Judas Iscariot. It is a position that cannot be maintained. It is unsupported either by revelation or reason. There is not an allusion to Judas in the sacred Scriptures which furnishes the slightest foundation for the belief that he was a man of good motives. Upon their testimony we are compelled to believe that it was for "thirty pieces of silver" that he betrayed his Lord. John branded him as a thief. He brought this indictment because he believed that Judas had appropriated to his own purposes a part of the "poor fund" with which he had been entrusted. There are a great many kinds of thieves; but the most degraded and contemptible of them all is the

one that steals from a charity fund. He is meaner than the wretch who exhumes a coffin and robs a dead body of its winding sheet.

How can we doubt that the treachery of this man was inspired by the love of money, when it stands upon the sacred record that he went to the chief priests and said, "What will ye give me?" He made a specific bargain with them to betray the Master into their hands, and the only compensation that he demanded for his infamous service and the only compensation that he received was money—"thirty pieces of silver."

Chronologists place the miracle of feeding the multitude with the few loaves and fishes just one year before the crucifixion. That miracle made Jesus so popular that the people were about to lay hands upon him and compel him to be their king. But when he rebuked them and began to preach to them about spiritual food, many of them went away and walked with him no more. It was at that time that Jesus gave the first hint concerning the real character of Judas. "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" I think it was then that Judas began to steal from the bag containing the charity money.

It is certain that he began to follow Christ with the expectation of material reward. He had left a good business to become an apostle. He thought

that he deserved some compensation for his trouble and sacrifice. What he was taking from the poor fund was much less than he could have made at his old business, and much less than he deserved. I suppose that these were about the excuses which Judas made to his conscience as he began his downward career.

From certain brief utterances, dropped at intervals, Judas suspected that Jesus knew that he was a thief. With the birth of this suspicion he began to dislike the Master.

As long as a bad man can conceal his meanness from you he is not apt to be hostile toward you; but when he discovers that you are cognizant of his bad character and iniquitous deeds he begins to hate you and to seek opportunities to inflict injuries upon you. A distinguished gentleman in one of our Southern cities invited me to dine with him that he might have a favorable opportunity to assure me of his warm sympathy with my temperance principles and work. His protestations of fealty to me and to the cause with which I was somewhat conspicuously identified were very emphatic and impressive. A few months afterward I came unexpectedly upon that man just as he was emerging from a bar-room. For months he did not speak to me when we met. My accidental discovery of his hypocrisy made him my enemy. So it was with Judas. As long as he

supposed Jesus to be ignorant of the baseness of his character he cherished for him no ill-feeling; but when he realized that Jesus understood him thoroughly, he hated him and was ready to seize the first opportunity to betray him.

A corrupt man cannot long disguise his character. He will not go very far before he will betray himself either in word or deed. Judas unwittingly uncovered his knavish spirit at Bethany, when Mary broke the alabaster box and anointed our Lord with costly oil. That scene, so beautiful and tender to the other disciples, brought to the surface all that was mean and wicked in the heart of the traitor. "Why was not this ointment sold and given to the poor?" This utterance of Judas was inspired by two feelings; one was hostility to Jesus, and the other a craving to put more money into his purse. It angered him to see such a tribute bestowed upon one whom he hated and desired to destroy. It distressed him because it had deprived him of another chance to steal. His words betrayed him. The apostles then saw what the Master had known from the beginning; and John, acting as spokesman for his brethren, said that Judas had protested against the conduct of Mary, "not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the bag."

We do not declare the whole truth concerning the conduct of Judas, when we say that it was for

money that he turned against Christ and betrayed him into the hands of his Jewish enemies.

Judas was an intense Judean. He started out with the Judaic conception of the Messianic character and mission of our Lord. When he discovered that Jesus had no thought of a temporal kingdom, and that he had no political offices and honors to bestow upon his followers, he was disgusted and angered, and determined that he would align himself, at the proper time, with the enemies of the Master. He was angry too, because Jesus knew his iniquitous spirit and purposes. He wanted to get rid of him because his presence was exceedingly embarrassing.

But while all this is true, I see no reason to doubt that the love of money, more than any other feeling, inspired Judas to betray our Lord. No other human passion is behind so many crimes as the love of money. Those who surrender themselves to it constitute the very worst element of society. Nothing but the fear of the prison and the gallows keeps them from theft and murder. When this master lust took possession of the mind and heart of Judas he was prepared not only to steal the money of the poor, but to betray God's Messiah, and thus become a party to that infernal deed which makes the blackest page in the world's history.

The modern apologists of Judas tell us that his repentance shows that he was not a thoroughly bad man. My reply to this is, that his repentance shows nothing more than that he had a conscience which lashed him most terribly for his stupendous crime. That is nothing in his favor, for the devil and his angels suffer in the same way. They are full of remorse for their folly in rebelling against God; but they are devils still. For thousands of years they have been wailing under the pangs of conscience, but they are as rebellious against truth and God to-day as when they were first placed under the chains of everlasting darkness.

It is true that Judas took the thirty pieces of silver, which he had accepted as a bribe, back to the high priests, threw them down at their feet, and exclaimed, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." It is evident that in this act he was moved by no higher and holier feeling than a desire to relieve his aching conscience. That money in his hands was a witness and a reminder of his terrible guilt. Every glittering coin was an eye through which infinite justice and holiness beheld his crime. The thirty pieces of silver were like so many tongues, crying to heaven for vengeance upon the man who had betrayed the Saviour of the world. He could no longer hold them, for their touch was like the sting of fire.

A man who is utterly destitute of the love of truth and virtue, can suffer remorse for his misdeeds. The most incurable criminals the world ever saw have died howling with remorse. What good thing did this traitor's aching conscience inspire him to do? Did he follow the being whom he had so cruelly and infamously wronged into the court of the Jews and there fall at his feet, testify to his innocence, and implore his pardon in the presence of his accusers? No. Did he follow him when they took him before Pilate and Herod, and plead for his release? No. Did he intercede for him when they clothed him with mock royalty, spat in his face, and beat him with loaded thongs? No. If he had gone with his confession of guilt to the innocent one against whom this sin was committed, and in the presence of judges and people had said, "Oh, my innocent Lord and Saviour, forgive me for this terrible wrong," methinks the gentle face of Jesus would have forgotten its crown of thorns, and that those sacred lips which Judas had treacherously kissed, would have tenderly and lovingly said, "My poor heart-broken Judas, be of good cheer, weep no more; thy sin is forgiven thee."

More than from any other being, Jesus deserved public confession from the lips of Judas. If Judas was the man that his modern defenders claim that he was, he would have sought the victim of his

crime and in the presence of his accusers poured out his soul in penitential confession at his feet. If he had done this, Christ would have been as merciful to him as he was to the penitent thief on the cross. If he had done this, he would not stand today in the pillory of history as the meanest of mankind. His repentance lacked the element which is most essential. He did not turn to God. True repentance is not the mere excitement and horror of a terrified conscience. It is bringing the guilty soul to God. It is sorrow looking up to the mercy of the infinite Father.

The weakest argument in defense of Judas is based upon the fact that he committed suicide. It is claimed that he destroyed himself to emphasize before the world his own condemnation of the wrong he had done, and to repair, as far as possible, the mischief resulting from his treacherous deed.

Now the truth is that this last act of Judas was unmitigated selfishness. It was inspired only by a desire to escape from suffering. He leaped into the arms of death hoping to find in them the angel of relief.

One of the most despicable products of this age is a sentiment which invests suicide with a glamour of romance and lauds it as an exhibition of heroic courage. No harsh words should be spoken of insane persons who take their own lives; but where

there is no insanity it is the most cowardly act of which a human being is capable. The man who deliberately takes his own life knows that by so doing he leaves a heritage of shame to his family. What could be meaner than that? The man who commits suicide knows that by so doing he is laying his burdens on other shoulders. What could be more ignoble? A merchant becomes bankrupt, and to escape the labor and struggle of rebuilding his fortune he puts a pistol to his head and blows his brains out. He knows that by that act he will disgrace his wife and children, fill their hearts with incurable grief, and doom them to a lifelong struggle with poverty. Such a man is the meanest of cowards, and his grave should be epitaphed with the world's contempt.

The suicide not only deserts the post of duty and all of his obligations to his family, neighborhood, and country, but he practically denies the existence of God. Can one who believes that he will meet the Almighty in the other world dare, in this disorderly way, to rush into his presence?

It is a significant fact that the "thirty pieces of silver" for which Judas betrayed Christ were used to purchase a burying ground for criminals, and that he, the arch-traitor, the world's blackest villain, was the first criminal that was buried there. The "Field of Blood," purchased by the price of infamy,

is the melancholy monument to the memory of the betrayer of Jesus Christ. "He fell that he might go to his own place." The doctrine of the Bible concerning the state of the wicked in the future world is in perfect harmony with natural law. Nothing that men believe has a better rational foundation.

About twenty years ago I went over from New York to Brooklyn in the afternoon of a summer's day to witness a contest between two baseball teams. Before the play began I noticed about a hundred men confined in a pen that was separated by a high wall from the terraced seats occupied by the main body of spectators. I asked a friend sitting near who those men were and why they were confined in that pen. He informed me that they were gamblers; that they were there to bet on the game, and that the law required them to keep to themselves.

It at once occurred to me that that was a very reasonable, wise, and just law. Birds of a feather must flock together. Let gamblers go by themselves. It is not only unnatural, but embarrassing for them to sit down with honest men. It is still more afflictive to pure-minded men and women to be brought into immediate contact with characters so vile and loathsome.

The doctrine of the future life is founded upon

the same principle which underlies that New York law. In the world to come every man will gravitate "to his own place." In death there is no transformation of character. If you are corrupt in this world you will be corrupt in the next. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." This life is the sowing time and the next will be harvest.

In the future state you will go into a moral atmosphere in keeping with your own moral character. By a law which inheres in its own being everything will seek its kind. Every soul will rise or sink to its own place. Liars must to liars go, drunkards to drunkards, whoremongers to whoremongers, tyrants to tyrants, thieves to thieves, murderers to murderers, and traitors to traitors. This is the eternal and immutable decree of the God of the universe.

Jesus said to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." Followers of the Lamb, toilers in the vineyard of the Lord, soldiers of the sacramental host—all ye who bear the burden and heat of the day and serve your generation according to the will of God, rejoice in the assurance that there is a place which your loving Lord has prepared for you. It is a place where nothing entereth that defileth or maketh a lie; where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest," and where the pure in heart shall see God.

My friend, my neighbor, let me, in concluding

this discussion, make it as practical as possible for you. Let me put this question to your conscience: To what place in the next world are you going? In the light of divine truth study your heart and consider your ways, and you cannot fail to discover whither you are drifting.

Lord God of truth and grace, teach us, cleanse our souls, discipline our lives, and guide our footsteps, that we may go to the place where thou art and from which the glory of thy presence shall never depart.

XVI

THE OLD AND THE NEW IN RELIGION

"Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein." Jer. 6 : 16.

In this chapter the prophet bewails the wanderings of the Jews from the ways of truth and righteousness, and exhorts them to return to the "old paths." The corruption of their faith had resulted in a corresponding corruption of their morals. This degeneracy was universal. The prophet says: "From the least of them even unto the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely." Holding this picture of their wretched condition before them, he exhorts them to repent and get back into the old paths of truth and virtue.

You will readily concede that the same exhortation might be very appropriately delivered to the present generation. We are living in an age in which there is a fierce conflict between the old and the new. This conflict is not confined to things

temporal, but extends into the realm of religion. In the churches of the Lord Jesus there are men who are attempting to lead us away from the faith and practice of our fathers, and to commit us to a view of Christianity which contradicts every great fundamental doctrine of the Bible.

Many of these men do not deny the past efficiency of the old faith. They admit that it has been a blessing to the world, but contend that we have reached a period of development when it can be no longer serviceable. They tell us that the historic Christ must give place to the ideal Christ, the objective to the subjective Christ, and the personal to the imaginary Christ. They say that in the church of the future Jesus will not be the divine Son of God, but the ideal man, and that preparation for the life to come will consist simply in the cultivation of the virtues illustrated by the life of Christ.

I am sure that it will not be a difficult task to convince you that you have nothing to gain, and much to lose, by forsaking the old faith for the new.

The Apostle John had been more than half a century in Christian life when he wrote, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith in what? What is the object upon which this conquering faith is centered? Hear him again. "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God."

John was warranted in making that declaration, not only by his own personal experience, but by his careful and diligent observation of the fruits of this faith in his fellow-Christians. The only men in all the range of his acquaintance who were conquerors of their own passions and of the world's temptations were the few who believed with all their hearts that the despised and crucified Jesus was the eternal Son of God.

Many of the new religionists of our day do not deny that John was warranted in making this statement. They admit also that from his age down to the present time a sincere faith in the absolute divinity of the man Christ Jesus has purified the hearts and lives of thousands, and made them victorious in every conflict with the world's ungodliness. But while they make these admissions, they assert that a new era has dawned upon the world, and that new forces have come into the lives of men to take the place of the old faith. They tell us that we have outgrown the conditions which made the old faith a necessity. I am not more confident of my existence than I am that these would-be religious reformers are "blind leaders of the blind," and that the womb of hell contains nothing more false than the new creeds which they offer to men.

In a few weeks we shall witness in this city a sort of ecclesiastical menagerie, called a "Congress

of Liberal Religions," that for variety of shapes and colors will exceed any similar combination upon which seekers of curiosity in our community have ever been permitted to gaze. The beasts, birds, and reptiles in Barnum's great traveling show were not more numerous or more dissimilar than the sects which are to constitute the great "Congress of Liberal Religions." It is hoped that their exhibition will continue with us a little longer than the average menagerie is wont to do, for there will be things in it that will require a much more protracted observation than is generally bestowed upon the circus hippopotamus or unicorn. Among the elements which will constitute this variegated combination are Mormons, Spiritualists, Christian Scientists, Unitarians, Universalists, Theosophists, Deists, Atheists, Buddhists, Free Thinkers, Free Lovers, and Agnostics. A love feast in such an assemblage of human beings is rendered possible by the fact that they are all hostile to the great primal doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I affirm, and can prove, that overcoming evil within ourselves, and successfully resisting it in the world without, is just as difficult now as it ever was, and that these results can be accomplished only through faith in Christ as the divine and eternal Son of God.

What is it to overcome the world? It is to

understand the moral laws of the universe and to so adjust ourselves to them that we may derive from them the blessedness which they were ordained to bestow. In adjusting himself to these laws, a man must first overcome himself, and this is his most difficult task. Man's appetites and lusts to-day are just what they have ever been. They are imperious and unreasoning. He is selfish, and intensely so. His selfishness manifests itself either in a denial of God, or in worshiping a god which is the mere creature of his corrupt imagination.

In trying to become upright, his first problem is how to dethrone self. Those of you who have never tried to bring yourselves into subjection to law and conscience and God, and to gain the mastery of the evils which tempt the soul, have no just conception of the severity of the struggle. As the power of a great stream of water is revealed only when it is resisted, so the strength of our depraved passions and of the seducing influences of the world are discovered only in our attempts to subdue them.

Some of you may imagine that it is an easy undertaking to uproot the habit of profanity. Try it the next time you get mad with your servant or your neighbor, and you will find that your little will is as weak as some frail reed when it is shaken by the wind.

If it has long been your practice to conceal your

thoughts and purposes by deceptive words and actions, you will never know the hold which this unrighteous habit has upon you until you attempt to become perfectly honest and transparent in all your dealings with men.

If the love of money is your master passion, you will never realize how complete and deplorable is your bondage until you attempt to disenthral your captive spirit.

How to master these sordid elements of your nature, how to become monarch of your own ungodly thoughts and passions, and silence every voice of temptation that comes to you from a world at war with truth and virtue, is the great problem which confronts you.

I find in other books than the Bible codes of morals which contain many things worthy of our observance. I find them in the writings of Plutarch. I find them in the meditations of Antoninus. I find them in the works of Lamartine and Voltaire. I agree with these writers in the main as to what I am and what I ought to be. The difference between us is, that they believe that by taking these universally accepted rules of conduct as my guide, I can, by a process of self-culture, become morally pure and good, while I believe that I can accomplish this end only by the intervention of a divine Person, who empowers men to become pure and upright.

Believing on Jesus Christ as the Son of God, I look up to him in prayer, and he communicates to me the grace which enables me to live in harmony with God's moral law. The hope of the new religionist is based upon power inherent in himself, but mine is founded on the merciful help of a personal God and Saviour.

Man's conflicts with himself and the world, in the present age, are just as fierce and bitter as they have ever been. Science and art have made real contributions to our welfare. One has discovered, and the other has applied, many hitherto unknown means of advancing the world in goodness and happiness. But notwithstanding these things, human life is still an arduous and painful struggle.

Men are everywhere exposed to mighty temptations. Our sons go forth from the parental roof to face a thousand foes to their virtue and happiness. In the realm of business they encounter maxims that are false, and customs deceitful and dishonest. The impression is made upon them at the very beginning that uncompromising moral integrity is an ideal that can never be realized, and that business of every sort has been reduced to such a fine point of competition, that the men who succeed are compelled to be tricksters.

They soon discover that money is king, and that in social life intellectual and moral culture weighs

but little against stocks, bonds, and bank accounts. They find that the veriest moral leper can mount to the pinnacle of social distinction, if he has the money to support his pretensions. They find that in the sphere of politics but little consideration is given to the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule. They find that in the race for political office and honor, men loyal to truth and conscience are easily defeated by sharpers and demagogues.

In the realm of social pleasure they see allurements to vice on every hand. If they refuse to visit a beer-garden, where men and women gather under the inspiration of music to drench themselves with intoxicating beverages and to feast their eyes upon the vice-breeding movements of the immodest ballet dancer, if they decline to participate in a game of progressive euchre, or refuse to accept from the hand of beauty the cup that is beaded with death and damnation, they are tabooed as boobies or Puritans or cranks.

If they walk the streets of our cities, they are never out of sight of the gilded bar-room, an institution established and fortified by the suffrages of their own fathers and patronized by men who are called by "the grand old name of gentlemen."

If they go into an art gallery, they find the most conspicuous places given to pictures which delight only the eye of sensuality. If they go into an opera,

or theatre, there are nine chances to one that they will see a performance which has as its theme the love of lust, and whose chief attractions are its suggestions of uncleanness.

Who will say that this is an overdrawn picture of the dangers which beset the young men of this generation? Who will venture to contradict me when I affirm that all the discoveries of modern science, all the appliances of modern art, all the blandishments of modern literature, and all the passion-breeding customs of modern fashionable society, have multiplied the perils which threaten the purity and honor of our sons and daughters?

The moral needs of mankind in this latter day are just as profound and urgent as they were in any former generation. Requisite provision for these needs can come from no mere human source.

Comfort, luxury, social elegance, and refinement, cannot cleanse the human soul of its pollutions. Depravity is as rank in the palace as in the hovel. Hatreds and discords are as common in high life as in humble life. The strifes of science are sometimes as bitter as the brawls of the fish-market. The meannesses of the literary man are as common and despicable as those of the milk carrier or the street scavenger.

Conscience is still an element and faculty of the human constitution. Science, education, and higher

civilization have not destroyed it. Remorse is as common among men to-day as it was a thousand years ago. The enlightened and cultured feel the sting of it as keenly as the rude and unlettered.

Human sorrow is just as prevalent and poignant now as it was in any previous age. Wherever we go, in our wanderings up and down the earth, we find hearts smitten with grief and bleeding with anguish. When I follow my child to the grave and hear the sad words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," my distress is just as deep and lonely as it would be if I were as ignorant as the peasant and poor as the pauper.

Death, in this age of science, luxury, and material splendor, is just as inevitable and unrelenting as it was in the earlier periods of the world's history. The learned are as reluctant to die as the ignorant. Death is as much the "king of terrors" to the millionaire as it is to the penniless beggar. The greatest man among us, in the dying hour, will feel as profoundly as the humblest and obscurest his need of divine consolation and support.

To eradicate the evil within us, to withstand the temptations without, to overcome sorrow, and meet death with a shout of triumph, what do we need? A new religion? A modified Christianity? A Christianity without a divine Christ? A religion which, when reduced to its final analysis, is nothing

but a system of self-culture? A religion which promises victory over the world by the development of personal energy and the growth of intelligence and wealth?

No. To renounce the old faith for such a system is to enter upon an experiment that will end in confusion, darkness, and despair. We must look for the "old paths" and walk therein. We must cling to the faith in which our Christian fathers lived and died. "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" You need more than personal intelligence and personal energy. You need divine help, the help of infinite love, mercy, and power. Not until your human weakness is joined to deific strength can you master the forces of evil in your own nature and put the world's temptations beneath your feet.

We do not need a new religion, but a more faithful teaching and a more fearless application of the old religion.

Moral law has no power over the conscience and life, except as we connect it with a divine and supreme Lawgiver. It is not the love of right that will make a man obedient to divine government, but his regard for that divine and infinitely righteous Personality who sits upon the central throne of the universe. The man without faith in a personal God and Saviour cannot be relied on in

any contest between right and wrong, because he has no inherent love of right and is destitute of the inspiration of any great and unselfish motive.

Jesus Christ is the rightful sovereign of the world. That is what the apostles taught and the martyrs preached. Get men to believe that, and they will be sober, chaste, and upright; get them to believe that, and "holiness unto the Lord" will be written on everything in commerce, in science, in philosophy, in literature, in politics, and in domestic and individual life.

We need more men in the living ministry who will not shirk the responsibility of declaring everywhere that Christ, the universal Monarch, will uphold the majesty of his government by visiting everlasting condemnation and wrath upon those who reject him and despise his authority.

That is a feature of the old religion which the apostles of the "new theology" are attempting to modify and soften. They cannot get rid of the doctrine of future retribution, because it is not only written in the Bible, but stamped upon the human conscience. Men instinctively know that there are distinctions between right and wrong, and that God will maintain these distinctions by rewarding the right and punishing the wrong. They instinctively know that a future judgment is needed for the vindication of the pure and faithful, whose portion

in this world is poverty, persecution, and anguish, and for the condemnation of the wicked and vicious, whose lives are comparatively free from pain and sorrow.

We need a Christian ministry that will zealously insist upon a rigid and faithful application of the precepts of the old religion to all the affairs of men. A wire-pulling and trick-inventing politician said, in a recent conversation: "I like my pastor better than any other minister in the city, because he preaches a gospel which never touches business or politics." Such a preacher is unworthy of his sacred livery, and should either repent of his cowardice or surrender his credentials and retire from the pulpit.

What does the prophet mean by "the old paths"? Evidently he means paths that have been opened and established by divine wisdom and authority. We instinctively feel and believe that there is something accessible to man that is infallible. We realize profoundly the necessity for an infallible standard of truth, wisdom, justice, love, and righteousness. What is that infallible standard? It is not human philosophy; it is not human tradition; it is not any human priesthood; it is not even the church of the living God. What is it? I believe, and I trust that you believe, that the only infallibility to be found in this lower world is in these

sacred Scriptures, which contain the thought and will of God, communicated to us by men who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

I accept this divine book, and I trust that you accept it, as the only infallible standard of religious faith and practice. If you charge me with heresy, I simply demand that you test my belief and practice by the teachings of this book. If you charge the denomination to which I belong with heresy, I only ask that you subject its faith to the same divine test.

Hitherto, in every quarter of the globe, the slogan of the Baptists has been, "The Bible, and the Bible only, our rule of faith and practice." With that motto inscribed upon our banner, we have conquered in a thousand bitter conflicts with priestcraft and traditionalism.

In this latter day men have risen up among us who would lead us away from "the old paths" by an amendment to the old standard of Baptist orthodoxy and by the invention of a new test of Baptist fellowship. Certain books purporting to be Baptist history have been written, and self-constituted heresy hunters tell us that unless we accept the statements of these historians as true, we are heretics and are unworthy of Baptist fellowship.

To this new test I will never submit. My faith is anchored on no human history or tradition. I

am planted not upon what Donatists, Novatians, Albigenses, Waldenses, Petrobrusians, or Anabaptists believed and practised in the remote past, but only upon what Jesus Christ and his inspired apostles taught. To depart from God's word to follow any human authority, history, or tradition is to enter a path that will lead to hopeless confusion and disaster.

Whether the Anabaptists in England under the pressure of a terrible persecution did for a century or more abandon immersion and practise sprinkling and pouring for baptism is a question which does not affect in the remotest degree the faith and practice of the Baptists of the nineteenth century. If believers' immersion is wrong, it is not wrong because the Anabaptists of England renounced it for a period; and if it is right, it is right independently of the belief and practice of any Christian sect. It is right because our divine Exemplar submitted to it and required his disciples everywhere and in every age to do the same.

I am constrained to believe that the present defection upon this question is but local and ephemeral, that it will pass away under the influence of a clearer statement and understanding of the foundation principles of our denomination, and that when the present controversy is ended the great Baptist army will be seen marching in the same old path,

and exalting, above all other wisdom and authority, the book whose every line is full of light and whose every page is stamped with the "eternal heraldry and signature of God Almighty."

XVII

CHRIST'S ACCOMPLISHED WORK

"It is finished." John 19 : 30.

This was next to the last utterance that Jesus made on the cross. In the Greek it is only one word. On the lips of the dying Christ that was the most pregnant word that ever fell on human ears. It was an epitome of divine revelation. It expresses the substance of God's great scheme of recovering mercy. It is the rock on which every rational hope of heaven is built.

Some are weak enough to imagine that Jesus meant simply to inform his friends that he had reached the point of insensibility to pain; but to us who look at this dying exclamation in the light of all that he had previously said concerning his death, it is apparent that he meant infinitely more than this. To us it is clear that in crying aloud, "It is finished," he signified that the work which he came into the world to do was accomplished, and that all the sufferings incident to that work had ceased.

His emotion at that moment was akin to that

which the philosopher feels, when after years of intense struggle with a great problem he reaches the solution, and exclaims, "I have it! I have it! And a sweet relief comes to my aching brain." It was a shout like that which goes up from a faithful crew, when, after battling all night with a storm that has raged like the fury of fiends, they reach the harbor, see the dawn gilding the eastern sky, furl the tempest-torn sails, cast anchor in peaceful waters and in sight of a shore where loved ones are waiting and watching for their return.

I hope, this morning, not only to interest you, but to quicken your spiritual life and promote your spiritual joy, in speaking both of the work and sufferings of our divine Redeemer that were completed on the cross.

1. Let us consider first the work. When Jesus was only twelve years old he was conscious that his life was destined to be an exceptional one. He felt that some great work was committed to him. Inspired by this conviction, he said to his parents, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

If there is a boy among your children who is chosen of God to be a leader of men, and to accomplish a great mission in commerce, or science, or literature, or art, or statecraft, or religion, he will give indications of it at a very early age. He real-

izes that he was born for something great, and that feeling makes him more thoughtful and serious than his brothers and sisters. At school he is a marked boy. His teachers see that he is taking life more seriously than any of his classmates. He is more to himself and more thoughtful about the future than his associates of the same age.

Jesus was such a boy. He felt that his Father in heaven had chosen and anointed him for some great mission to men. What that mission was, and how it should be accomplished, he but dimly comprehended in the days of his childhood. It grew upon him as he grew in years and strength. Every hour of communion with God and of meditation upon the Hebrew prophecies rendered his conceptions of it more distinct.

He saw around him a world lying in wickedness. He saw that men everywhere were violators of divine law, and that having transgressed that law they were condemned and under sentence of death.

The world needed a divine Redeemer. Such a deliverer was promised in the sacred Scriptures. As Jesus read the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and studied the types and ceremonies which prefigured his work, the conviction grew upon him that he himself was the being who was destined to fulfill all the law and the prophets. He realized more and more that he was "the seed of the woman"

that should bruise the serpent's head; that he was the one typified by the brazen serpent which was lifted above the camp of the dying Israelites; that he was the one concerning whom Isaiah wrote, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

When Jesus said upon the cross, "It is finished," he meant that he was God's Messiah, and that by his life, sufferings, and death, he had fulfilled all the Messianic types and prophecies of the Old Testament.

From the beginning of his public life he was thoroughly dominated by the thought and conviction that a great task was upon him. His purpose to perform that task possessed him completely. He gave to it all the resources of his body, mind, and spirit. On one occasion when the disciples offered him food, he turned them away, saying, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." As he drew near to the completion of that work, he exclaimed, "I have a baptism to be bap-

tized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

He had a work to do, and it was something greater than any other human being had ever attempted. Men consecrate themselves to science and bless the world by multiplying its discoveries. Some devote themselves to the liberation of their country from the galling yoke of despotism. Others wear themselves out in grappling with great questions of philosophy. Some enrich the world with imperishable contributions of sculpture, or painting, or music. Others imperil their lives in opening up unexplored continents, and die with their faces to the task. But no one ever undertook a task worthy to be compared to that which engaged the mind and heart of Jesus, the task of saving a lost world.

The consciousness that his was a work for God was the chief source of our Lord's inspiration. "I must work the works of him that sent me." "The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things which please him."

At the close of his ministry he looked up into the face of his Heavenly Father and said: "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

The highest and holiest feeling that can inspire human activity is a desire to please God and glorify his name. As this feeling was supreme in the heart

of Christ, we know that we are lifted into fellowship with him when we are conscious that our regnant purpose is to advance the triumphs of God's truth and righteousness in the world. The highest archangel in heaven is not more thoroughly in sympathy with Jesus Christ than the man on earth whose ruling desire is to please God.

The satisfaction which we experience in finishing a great task is generally in proportion to the difficulties we have encountered and mastered in the performance of it.

When Christopher Columbus, after a long and perilous voyage, saw at last the sunlight on the peaks of the New World and realized that his life-work was about accomplished, the memory of all the difficulties he had met in securing pecuniary aid for his undertaking, and of all the dangers he had faced in battling with storms and contending with a mutinous crew, made success a thousand-fold sweeter than it would have been if the enterprise had been free from struggle, peril, and suffering.

What must have been the joy of the heroic and patient men who followed George Washington through all the scenes and suffering of a seven years' war, when they received the announcement that Great Britain had acknowledged the independence of the American colonies, that their patriotic task was finished, that the long and bitter struggle

was over, and that they were free to return to their homes and enjoy all the rich fruits of the victory they had won?

There are some men-destroying and God-defying institutions in this country which I have been fighting for more than thirty years with almost the energy of desperation. If my heavenly Master spares me to see them die I shall have a feeling akin to that which old Simeon had when he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

I sometimes try to imagine what would be the joy of that old temperance hero, Neal Dow, if he could live to see the downfall of every bar-room and distillery on American soil. I think he would want to get hold of the tongue of another "liberty bell" and ring out to the world tidings as glorious as the message which went forth from Independence Hall in 1776. I have tried to imagine what my own feeling would be if I should wake up some morning and hear that the accursed liquor traffic had perished from our soil. It would be a rapture which the highest of the angelic throng could afford to covet.

These, my friends, are but feeble suggestions of what Christ saw and felt when from the cross he exclaimed, "It is finished!" We are wont to dwell upon the agony of our dear Lord as he hung

upon the tree; it must beget in us a sweet relief to believe that he had there also an experience of joy, a joy equal even to that which he felt when he ascended from Olivet and the everlasting gates were opened to receive him. What other emotion could have filled him in that moment when he said, "It is finished"?

These words were spoken to two worlds, heaven and earth. To God and the angels they meant that the mission on which he had left the celestial world was accomplished. He had revealed God to man. He had brought to light every attribute of the invisible Jehovah. He had declared his righteous displeasure against sin. He had revealed God's fatherly pity and mercy for the sinner. He had laid himself as a victim upon the altar of divine justice, and thereby magnified the law and made it honorable. He had planted a kingdom in the hearts of men that could not be overthrown, and that was destined to revolutionize and bring into subjection to God's will every other kingdom. In all this he had glorified his Father on the earth.

Finished! To men this meant that he had bridged the chasm which was made when sin entered the world and heaven and earth went asunder. By bearing their sins in his own body on the tree he had paid their indebtedness to divine justice, and not only saved them from the wrath to

come, but provided a righteousness by which all who believe on him are justified and made meet for the kingdom of heaven.

In announcing the consummation of this sublime work there must have been in the heart of Christ a satisfaction infinitely deeper and stronger than any joy which earthly victor ever felt in being crowned and sceptered amid the resounding acclamations of an admiring and grateful nation.

When his quivering lips exclaimed, "It is finished!" this poor blind world did not know what he meant. Heaven understood him, and up there in the realm of glorified beings there was such a demonstration as had never been witnessed before. Every banner was lifted higher; every face kindled with the brightness of a deeper joy; every crown glittered with a more resplendent beauty; and there was such a chorus of hallelujahs as had never rent the air and shaken the vault of heaven.

2. Having spoken of his work, let us consider also his sufferings, for he meant that they too were finished. The life of Jesus was one of unprecedented struggle and anguish. No other being had ever accomplished his life-work under conditions so unfriendly. The people whom he came to seek and save had the grossest misconceptions of his character and mission. One of the most pathetic statements to be found in the Gospels is, "He was in the

world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."

Inconceivably distressful must have been his sense of isolation. He needed human sympathy, and he longed for it, but, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." His purpose was so beneficent, and his desire to do good to men so obvious, it seems utterly inscrutable that he should have met with anything but encouragement and furtherance in his mission.

But the more his great heart opened to the world the more the world shut its hard heart against him. In planting the standard of the purest and most helpful religion that was ever offered to men, it seems that sincere religious teachers would have hailed his coming and rallied to his support. But priests, elders, and doctors of the law, not only stood aloof from him and despised him, but confederated with every evil element to destroy him. As he breathed the spirit of the truest and loftiest patriotism, it does seem that his fellow-countrymen would have greeted him everywhere with tokens of sympathy and appreciation; but they treated him as a conspirator and traitor.

He was so philanthropic, so devoted to the work of relieving human want and suffering, we cannot understand the opposition of the people. He healed their sick, cleansed their lepers, made their lame

walk and leap with joy, opened the eyes of their blind, and unstopped the ears of their deaf; but when they might perhaps have saved his life, they cried out: "Away with him! Crucify him!"

Everything that was influential in his age and country was against him. Civil government, ecclesiastical rulers, and the people, combined to thwart and crush him.

Who can tell what his sensitive spirit suffered in contending with all this opposition to his peaceful and merciful mission? Who can tell what he suffered when Judas betrayed him and Peter denied him? Who can fathom his sense of humiliation when the mob came upon him and he received that staggering blow from the servant of the high priest? How his heart must have bled when they clothed him with mock royalty and spit in his face! Think of the torture he endured when they scourged him with loaded thongs until he was too weak to carry his cross to the place of execution.

Think of all the physical agonies that he experienced in having the rugged iron spikes driven through his hands and feet. Think of the terrible pangs that shot through his frame when they lifted the cross, to which they had nailed him, and jerked it into the mortised rock. Think of the loss of blood and the consequent dizziness and fainting, and the burning, maddening thirst.

But what he suffered up to that point was almost insignificant in comparison with what he endured in that hour of utter darkness, when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Forsaken of God! That men should forsake him was not so strange. Must he endure not only the malice of mobs, the denial of friends, the fury of fiends, the desertion of earth about him, and the murmuring heavens above, but have mingled with the unutterable cup the hidings even of his Father's face?

Why did God forsake him? That is a matter which it behooves us to look into. Why did God the Father desert his Son in that hour of his greatest trial? I am absolutely sure that I do not mislead you when I say that it was because sin rested upon him. It was not his own sin, but the sin of the guilty and ruined race which he came to seek and to save. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin." All human guilt was laid upon him, and that made an object so revolting that God would neither look upon it nor allow his sun to shine upon it. Think, if you can, of what would be a just punishment for a single transgression of the infinitely holy law of the infinitely holy God and then multiply it by the whole sum of human transgressions. If you could do this, you might have something like a true conception of what Jesus suffered when he "tasted death for every man."

Take the agony which David felt when he thought of his double crime of adultery and murder, and exclaimed, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight!" or take the maddening woe of Judas, when he threw down the price of his infamy in the temple and went out into the night and put an end to his life, and multiply it by the drops of water in the ocean or the atoms of matter in the universe. If it were possible for you to do this, you might approach something like a just conception of the "horror of great darkness" that came upon the soul of Jesus when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

What speech, human or superhuman, could express the blessedness of the relief which he experienced when he exclaimed, "It is finished!" When he said that the anguish was over, the burden had dropped, the cloud and darkness had passed, legions of ministering angels were about him, God's smiling face was before him, and the whole universe resounded with "*Gloria in Excelsis.*" As a reward for this finished work and suffering, God has exalted him and given him a name that is above every name, a name to which every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, in the heavens above and the earth beneath.

In beholding the inauguration of a great civil

ruler, in witnessing the bonfires, illuminations, and processions, and in listening to the blasts of brazen trumpets, the thunder of cannon, and the deafening acclamations, which gave expression to the admiration, joy, and fealty of the people, I tried to transfer my thoughts to that infinitely grander scene where a redeemed world and a rejoicing universe of sinless and exalted beings shall gather to pay tribute to Jesus Christ. There not only every kindred and every tribe on this planet, but all angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, will join the everlasting song and crown him Lord of all.

Brethren, is there not unspeakable inspiration and joy in the thought that we, who now patiently labor and suffer with Christ, and whose unfaltering purpose is to be faithful unto death and finish the work committed to our hands, shall be with him, and share the rapture and glory of his coronation? No prophet has foreseen, no artist has painted, and no poet has sung of a destiny more exalted and blissful than that which awaits us in that life beyond, unmeasured by the flight of years. If present dreams and visions of it are so sweet, who can express the rapture of our souls when we come to the realization of this long-cherished hope, when mortality is swallowed up of life, and we see not as now, "through a glass darkly," but face to face.

There is but one word in our language that expresses the felicity of the state to which we are tending. That word is satisfied. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." "*Ne plus ultra.*" Beyond and above that human aspiration cannot go.

XVIII

INSTABILITY OF CHARACTER

"Meddle not with them that are given to change." Prov. 24 : 21.

THESE inspired words of caution commend themselves to our judgment and common sense. Both reason and experience teach us that it is unwise and unsafe to involve ourselves financially, politically, socially, or otherwise, with men who are unstable and capricious. It is unsafe to make them leaders or counselors or confederates in any cause.

The man who is anchored to nothing, and is adrift in the wide world of human thought and activity, having no settled purposes or convictions, not knowing one day what he will do or what he will be the next, is not the man to be our adviser or guide in any sphere. The unstable man is sure to fail in everything that he undertakes. He begins many things but completes nothing. He staggers under the weight of high conceptions and big schemes which never materialize. He is a crusader to-day for a cause which he will renounce to-morrow. He

follows nothing to a successful issue. He carries no banner to complete and final victory.

Only a few days ago I was asked to express an opinion as to the qualifications of a certain well-known man for the management of a newly organized religious movement. My reply was:

"The only thing which disqualifies him for the position is his instability of purpose. He speaks well, he writes well, his ambition is vaulting, his enthusiasm intense, and his energy uncommon; but, in a public career of thirty years, every enterprise committed to his care has perished because he would not hold to it long enough to make it successful."

I imagine that it was just such a character that Solomon had before his mind's eye when he wrote the words of the text: "Meddle not with them that are given to change."

Look anywhere and you will see illustrations of our subject.

1. Instability of character is seen in the restless and roving disposition of men who go from country to country. I do not deny that circumstances arise which justify men in removing from one locality to another, and in transferring their allegiance from one nation to another.

The Pilgrim Fathers, who came hither and built their homes in a wilderness infested with savages

and wild beasts, were not unstable men. It was their steadfast devotion to a great principle that brought them here. They came to preserve their birthright. They came to establish a community and to found a nation in which they could be free to worship God in their own way. This magnificent fabric of free government stands to-day an eloquent and enduring witness to their wisdom, their energy, and their unflagging devotion to a sacred cause.

The thousands who have come to these shores because they found it impossible in their own native lands to provide for themselves and their families, have simply obeyed a virtuous instinct implanted in their breasts by their benignant Creator. I have nothing to say against the multitudes of young men who, with manly and patriotic motives, have left the habitations of their fathers in these older States of our republic, and have gone West to the very borders of civilization.

The unstable man is he who changes without an adequate reason, roves just because he loves to rove, and is never satisfied with any country, because he imagines that somewhere under the sun there is a better one.

I will say to the present generation of young men in the South, that no spot on this globe offers a better opening to-day for the successful prosecution of almost any legitimate business than the territory

which lies within the precincts of these Southern States. The man who cannot succeed in such a country is incapable of success anywhere. The young man who gives up a moderately good business situation in Alabama to seek his fortune in the far-off gold fields of Alaska, makes a mistake from which he will never recover. If he should live to return, he will never forgive himself for believing the seductive stories of the sharpers and knaves who took advantage of his ignorance and credulity.

2. Instability of character is illustrated by men who shift from one occupation to another and who stick to no trade or profession long enough to succeed at it.

If a man has entered a vocation for which he has no natural aptitude, and has gone far enough to be thoroughly convinced of his inability to succeed, it is not only wisdom, but duty to forsake it for some other employment.

If a man has tried farming for ten years and made nothing, he owes it to himself, his family, and the cause of agriculture to quit the business. There are many lawyers who might change their occupation without any serious detriment to the cause of justice and humanity. There are physicians who might abandon their profession without incurring any suspicion of cruelty to their patients. There are musicians, some vocal and some instrumental,

who could withdraw their talents from public view without impoverishing the profession, or afflicting the communities to which they have devoted their services. There are statesmen out of a job who might continue in a state of involuntary retirement without inflicting any serious injury upon the country.

As a rule men do not change from one occupation to another on account of their inability to succeed, but from a love of novelty, from a desire to vary their experiences and activities. The same routine of employment, from year to year, becomes monotonous, and they crave the excitement incident to new endeavor in a new field. I once read of a Western man, who having tried farming, teaching, literature, dentistry, medicine, law, politics, and preaching, closed his inglorious career as a peripatetic peddler of cheap tombstones.

Paul says, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." He declares it to be your moral and religious duty to hold on to your vocation, if it be one to which you are adapted by natural endowment. By your patient and untiring pursuit of any honest and honorable business, and by your continued success in it, you not only enrich yourself and help your fellow-men, but please and glorify God.

I have heard a man give as his excuse for

changing his business that it was surrounded by too many temptations to wrong-doing. We can readily conceive of cases in which this would be a valid and sufficient reason for a change of occupation. If I were in the service of a merchant or manufacturer who required me to go into bar-rooms and gambling houses to solicit custom, I would give up my situation without a moment's hesitation. I would go in rags, live in a log hut, sleep on a pallet of straw, and suffer the pangs of cold and hunger, rather than defile and debase my manhood with any such ignominious work.

But if you keep out of business until you can find employment free from temptation you will be an idler for the rest of your life. You may change from place to place, but until you get beyond the stars, you will not be out of gunshot of the devil. Evil spirits surround men in every situation and condition. The poor man is sorely beset with temptations incident to hardships, and the rich are encompassed by a thousand influences unfriendly to virtue. He who toils with his hands feels the pressure of temptation, but he who toils with his brain feels it more.

I do not doubt that virtuous living is easier in some pursuits than in others. It seems to be commonly conceded that politicians, newspaper men, tax collectors, plumbers, and undertakers, are more

susceptible to Satanic suggestion than the generality of mankind. No vocation is free from malign influences. Whether our work be secular or sacred, in the counting-room or the prayer meeting, on the rostrum or in the pulpit, the devil is there with his old bribe: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

3. Instability of character is seen in the frequency with which some church-members change from one post of religious service to another. A man who has successfully occupied a certain position in his church sees a higher place and, without considering the question of fitness for it, is impatient and unhappy until he is put into it.

I do not doubt that in some instances men who make such changes act wisely. If a Christian worker has outgrown his place and is manifestly qualified for a higher and broader one, it is his privilege and duty to change. The church will not be slow in recognizing his growth and his fitness for a larger work, and will advance him as rapidly as he ought to go. It is better to do a little thing perfectly than a great thing imperfectly. It is better to be a success as a bootblack than a failure as a painter. It is more honorable to be a skillful cobbler than a briefless lawyer. An intelligent and active church-member who holds no office is regal in comparison with an ignorant and inefficient dea-

con. If there is one thing the world needs less than another it is the preacher who cannot preach. A pastorless church is a sad spectacle, but a preacher without a pulpit because no church is poor enough to need him, is an object which calls for still deeper commiseration.

My brother, be not impatient to change your sphere of Christian activity. Restrain your aspirations for a higher place in the synagogue. Curb your craving for the uppermost seat at the feast, lest you get into a place for which you are unfitted and from which the Lord and your brethren would have you step down.

4. The most mischievous and deplorable exhibitions of instability are seen in the frequent radical changes which some men make in their religious beliefs. During my brief residence here, I have been amazed at the number of men in this city who have drifted from solid Christian orthodoxy either to unmitigated agnosticism or to practical atheism. If there were anything worse than agnosticism and atheism they would go to that.

When men cease to believe in an almighty and eternal Father, who lives and reigns everywhere in the boundless universe, and who governs all things in wisdom, righteousness, and love, there will come a wail of never-dying sorrow from every nation, kindred, tongue, and tribe, a cry that will declare

human existence to be a burden and a wrong, for which the only relief is a sleep which knows no waking.

That men who have ever known the blessedness of trusting the Lord Jesus Christ, that men who have heard his gracious voice speaking peace to their secret souls, should turn away from him to the empty cisterns of human philosophy is to me the most perplexing of all problems. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Where shall we find another refuge from sin, and guilt, and aching care? We are like Noah's dove that went out from the ark, and found nowhere, amid all the waste of waters, a resting-place for its feet. Where in all the world, or in all the limitless universe, can we find rest for our souls away from the cross of Christ?

I have had rationalistic moods, I have gone forth for a season to explore new fields and to find some new food for my craving spirit, but from every such excursion I have returned with a sad heart; and to get back the old peace and joy for which I longed, I have had to sing the old song over and over again:

> Nothing in my hands I bring,
> Simply to thy cross I cling;
> Naked, come to thee for dress,
> Helpless, look to thee for grace.

Stability of character is something whose worth we cannot measure. It is Godlikeness. As man develops morally and spiritually he rises toward equality with God. One of the most beautiful and adorable attributes of the Deity is his immutability. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." What he loved and what he hated when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy over the birth of a new world he loves and hates at this moment. Sin is as black and repulsive to his eye now as it was when he drove Adam from paradise or when he hurled Satan from the battlements of heaven.

If we are conscious that we are becoming more and more fixed and immutable in our hatred and intolerance of all uncleanness and unrighteousness, we may know that we are rising toward equality with God.

Diogenes, the philosopher, lived a life of great simplicity and self-denial. When he reached his eighty-fifth year his friends said: "Now, Diogenes, take your ease, dismiss care and labor, and live after the manner of the Epicureans." The old philosopher's reply was: "One so near the goal as I cannot afford to falter in the way of virtue."

A few months ago my heart was deeply wounded by some unknown enemy, who caused to be published in more than a hundred newspapers the

statement that I had forsaken the pulpit for the lecture platform. It was extremely harrowing to my soul to know that any man in this broad land could believe me capable of such unfaithfulness to the Lord who bought me with his precious blood and put me into the work of the Christian ministry. Thanks be to God, I am too near the shining goal to think of faltering now. With my eyes lifted to the pearly gates of the eternal city, where I shall soon sit, robed, crowned, and sceptered at the right hand of Majesty, and join with the millions of the redeemed in an eternal anthem of victory, no temptation to forsake the work of Christ could move me.

Paul said that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," could separate him from Christ. In these eloquent words he simply expressed his unconquerable determination to persevere unto the end. He did persevere; he was faithful unto death, and when the end came he exclaimed: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown."

Brethren, let us covet and seek a stability of Christian purpose that neither the wrath of men nor the fury of fiends can shake.

In the latter half of the third century, Arcadius suffered martyrdom rather than worship the gods of pagan Rome. The order of the magistrate was that he should be slowly dismembered. His fingers were first taken off, joint by joint; then his toes; then his hands at the wrist; then his feet at the ankles. When this had been done, he looked up to heaven and said: "O God, keep me faithful to the end." The executioners then cut out his tongue. They threw him upon his back and amputated his legs at the knees and his arms at the elbows. He expired in a pool of blood, steadfast to the last.

My brother, can you look upon such an exhibition of fealty as that and not blush for your own cowardice in turning aside from the path of Christian rectitude and duty to escape the jeers and ridicule of a giddy and godless throng?

We have come to a time when the church of God must have more stability in the character of her members or else retire from many of her battle-fields. She needs more men who are rooted and grounded in the truth, men whose faith is eternally anchored, men whose courage will abide the presence of any opposition or any danger, men who will wear the colors of their divine Captain in the face of any foe, men who will stand and suffer all that infidel malignity and Satanic enmity can lay upon them, men who at any moment would part with

property, liberty, and life itself, rather than prove false to any principle of the gospel of Christ.

I thank God that we have in our churches a few men and women of this type. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. It is their hold on the eternal verities of God's word that renders possible the final overthrow of all unrighteousness and unbelief, and the conversion of the whole world to the faith of the gospel. It will be in answer to their prayers and to reward their fidelity that the Lord God will, by and by, open the gates of the morning and fill the whole earth with the light and beauty of his truth and grace.

XIX

THE TWO MARYS AT THE SEPULCHRE

"And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre." Matt. 27 : 61.

Neither in the New Testament nor in the writings of the apostolic Fathers is there the faintest trace of the celebration of Easter as a Christian festival. The sanctity of special times and places was an idea absolutely alien to the early Christian mind. Easter observance is purely of human origin. To that class of Christians who accept the sacred Scriptures as the highest authority and the only rule of religious faith and practice, every Lord's Day is Easter. Every Sabbath's sun reminds them of the adorable being who on that day rose in triumph from the grave. The celebration of the resurrection of Christ is a service appropriate to any Sunday in the year. Every Lord's Day, by songs and prayers and sermons and floral offerings, we should commemorate Christ's victory over the grave. Every administration of the ordinance of baptism is

a commemoration of that glorious event. Just as the observance of the Lord's Supper commemorates his death on the cross, so does a burial with Christ in baptism remind us that after his crucifixion he was buried and rose again.

Joseph and his companions had rolled the great stone to the door of the sepulchre and retired in sorrow to their homes; the mob that surrounded the cross had dispersed; the disciples had gone every one to his own house; and around the tomb in which the body of Jesus was laid there was silence, broken only by the sighs and sobs of two women who lingered there to indulge their grief. "And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre."

"The other Mary" was the mother of James and Judas—not Iscariot—and Joseph. Two of her sons had been appointed to the apostleship. It is not strange that the mother of such children loved Christ, and that one whom he had so highly honored was among the last to leave his grave.

Her companion was Mary Magdalene. I will venture to express the opinion that great injustice has been done to the memory of this noble woman. All through this country and Europe there are asylums for fallen women which, by bearing the name of Magdalene, convey to the world the impression that she was a converted harlot. There is

not a word in the New Testament that supports any such conception of her character. She was at one time possessed of seven devils, but that does not indicate that she was an outcast, because even innocent little children were subject to demoniacal possession. Whether she had been a great sinner or not, we know that she had been a great sufferer. Both in mind and body she endured agonies akin to the tortures of the damned.

Have you ever seen an incarcerated madman fighting with phantoms, grappling with all manner of imaginary horrors, shrieking with pain, and crying for help? A hundred-fold worse than that was the condition of Mary Magdalene when she was crazed, maddened, and tortured by infernal spirits. Could anything be more natural than her gratitude and her lingering at the tomb of the benevolent being who had delivered her from Satanic bondage?

Approaching night compelled these women to leave the sepulchre. They went home to prepare for the anointing of the sacred body. They had no thought of embalming it, because that was a service which belonged exclusively to men. It was their purpose simply to anoint the face and hands and feet with fragrant oil. That was a beautiful suggestion of love. We are moved by a kindred impulse when we plant flowers and evergreens on the graves of our precious dead.

They prepared for the anointing on Friday night. The next day was the Jewish Sabbath. The sacred historian says, they "rested the sabbath day according to the commandment." What an exhibition of reverence for that sacred day! They felt that it would not be in keeping either with the character of the day, or the spirit of the divine Master, to spend even a part of it in going to his grave to anoint his body. It seems to me that their example should be taken as a solemn rebuke to the thousands of Christian men and women who visit cemeteries on that holy day to decorate the tombs and weep over the dust of their dead kindred.

Have you ever sat down and quietly thought of the situation on that memorable Sabbath? The Prince of Life was in the grave. The eternal Word that was in the beginning with God, and that was God, after a life of thirty-three years in the flesh, was numbered with the dead and locked up in a sepulchre of stone. Did ever the earth revolve upon its axis with such a strange and priceless treasure in its bosom? In that tomb was not only the body of our Christ, but our life, our hope of heaven, and the keys of death and hell.

Imagine the world's condition to-day if he were still in the grave. If he had not fulfilled his promise to rise from the dead, we would not be here to honor him with anthems of praise, but to denounce

him as the arch-impostor of our race. We would not be here to sing of a glorious immortality, but to join the great army of unbelieving sensualists in shouting, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die."

"While it was yet dark, on the first day of the week," Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the sepulchre to anoint the body of Jesus. How dared they go to that tomb? How dared they even speak of putting their hands upon that body? Had not Pilate, the Roman governor, at the request of the priests and elders, sent a band of Roman soldiers there to watch it? Were not these soldiers told that an attempt would be made to steal it from its burial place? Were they not commanded to guard it to the last extremity? Did they not know that they would forfeit their lives if they permitted any human hand to touch it? In view of these facts it did seem that the undertaking of these women was reckless and foolish.

But there is nothing that love, and especially a woman's love, will not dare to do. There is no peril and no suffering that can deter her when her heart is set upon ministering to one upon whom her highest affection is bestowed. The most heroic things in Christian martyrology were done by women. If she was first to sin, she was first in her devotion to the great remedial scheme by which

sin can be overcome and destroyed. If there had been a lake of fire between Jerusalem and the grave of Jesus those women would have attempted to cross it.

They had other barriers to overcome besides the Roman guard. They had seen the huge stone placed before the door of the sepulchre. They knew that their arms were too feeble to remove it. Did that deter them? Nay. They moved on as confident of success as if each possessed the strength of a Samson. In physical strength the average woman is inferior to the average man, but in courage and determination she is not the weaker vessel. When the three Hebrew women stood by the cross of the dying Christ, where were the men who a few days before had scattered palm branches in his pathway and shouted hosanna to his name? Where were the apostles, the men who had followed him for three years and who had received the highest office in his kingdom? Alas! they had forsaken him and fled, all save one, and he of all men was the most womanly in his nature.

Inspired by faith and love, Mary Magdalene and her companion went in the early morning to the tomb with the determination to face any difficulty. But they found no obstacle, either in the Roman guard or in the massive stone before the door. God had gone before them. "And behold, there was a

great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake and become as dead men."

Brethren, I believe that every true believer in the "Lord of life and glory" has for his helper in this lower world some ministering angel, and wherever there is a task too difficult for his own strength that ministering angel stands ready to accomplish it for him.

Sometimes questions like these will come into our minds: Why did not this great angel who rolled the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre interpose for the rescue of the innocent Christ? Why did he sit quietly in heaven while Jesus was in the hands of the mob? Why did he not come down on Calvary and smite his murderers and take him from the cross? In answer to these questions it is sufficient to say that the death of Jesus Christ was a necessity of God's moral universe. It was an indispensable part of the great scheme of redemption "that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." It was not until he cried, "It is finished," and "bowed his head and gave up the ghost," that helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim could interfere. Jesus himself

said that he must needs go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the priests and elders, and be crucified, and rise again on the third day.

The appearance of a solitary angel at the sepulchre shows how economical God is in the use of his resources. There was a band of brave soldiers to be overcome and a great stone to be lifted from the entrance to the tomb. How was it done? Not by an army of angels. Only one of that innumerable company around the throne of the Almighty was sent to perform this task. His appearance was sufficient to paralyze with fear the hearts and arms of the Roman guard, and his hand alone was sufficient to break the seal and roll away the stone.

You remember that when God executed vengeance upon all the people of Egypt it was done by a solitary angel.

When the Israelities were dying from the sting of the flying serpent, how did God save them? By simply lifting a brazen serpent above their camp.

In setting up a kingdom on the earth that should outlive and overthrow all other kingdoms, Christ did not call a council of great and mighty men and invoke their sympathy and aid. He simply commissioned a few Galilean fishermen to go out and reiterate the truths which they had received from his lips.

Happy angel must he be who was commissioned

to unseal the tomb and to behold the resurrection of the world's Redeemer. How thrilling must be the story which we shall, by and by, hear from the lips of that angel! If, as Daniel Webster says, "eloquence is in both the subject and the occasion," what may we expect from that celestial orator when, surrounded by the white-robed millions of heaven, he stands up to speak of what he felt on that morning of the first day of the week, as he stooped down and looked into the sepulchre and saw the dead Christ revive, lay aside the grave-clothes, and come forth? If there is ever to be silence in heaven, if lute and harp and trumpet are ever laid aside for an hour, it will be when God's angel tells the story of the resurrection of Jesus. Not one of the sacred writers attempts any description of the resurrection. How could they describe a scene which was witnessed by no human being and that was too sublime to be depicted by any human speech?

Christ was crucified publicly, but he rose from the dead secretly. No mortal eye beheld him coming out of the tomb. Why were not the Sanhedrin and all Jerusalem gathered around the sepulchre to witness his victory? What an opportunity to convert his enemies and to remove the last vestige of doubt from every honest mind. Why was not his resurrection as public as his crucifixion? And when he had risen from the dead, why did he show

himself only to his disciples? Why did he not go out to some mountain height and invite all Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and the whole world to come and see that he had risen from the dead?

My only answer is, that God has ordained that, in reference to some things, we shall "walk by faith and not by sight." In the exercise of his sovereign wisdom and will he has made our salvation dependent on faith. He gives us only such evidence as is required to constitute a basis for faith. He will give us no more than this. To cultivate faith there must not be too much sight. To any man who loves the truth, the evidence of Christ's resurrection is sufficient. There were more than five hundred witnesses to it. The character of these witnesses who saw him again and again after he came out of the grave, the pure and self-denying lives they led, the sacrifices they made, and the sufferings they endured in bearing testimony to the resurrection, will remove every rational doubt from any mind that has an honest desire to know the truth.

The angel that had terrified the guard spoke kindly to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, and sent them away to tell the disciples what they had seen and heard. Inspired with ecstatic joy, they immediately ran back into the city and began to tell their marvelous story. What was the effect of it

upon the disciples? Though Jesus had said, "The Son of man must be crucified, and the third day rise from the dead," the words of these women were to the most of them like an idle tale. Peter and John, however, were curious enough to investigate the matter. They ran with all their might to the sepulchre. When they arrived, seeing that the stone had been rolled away, they looked in and found nothing but the grave-clothes. The body of their Lord was not there.

Convinced that he had risen, they went back to their homes and to their fishing nets. Mary Magdalene remained and wept before the door of the empty grave. Why did she linger there? What more did she want? Peter and John had told her that they had looked into the grave and that it was vacant. Why did she not return with them? She did not go away, because it was there that she got the last glimpse of her beloved Lord. Her heart clung to the spot with all the infatuation of an uncontrollable and deathless affection. See the fond mother as the body of her darling child descends into the deep, cold grave. See her as she bends over, with aching heart, to take a last look at the coffin which contains the precious dust. See her when the burial is over and the multitude has dispersed. See how she lingers to weep and pray. It was with a sorrow deeper and keener than this that

Mary Magdalene tarried at the spot where she had the last sight of her divine Benefactor.

As she wept she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre. What did she see? Not the empty tomb which Peter and John had found, but "two angels in white, sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." Oh, what a sight was that! And what a recompense of all her constancy of love. As in the holy of holies the cherubim stood over the Ark of the Covenant, so over the place where the body of Jesus had slept these two angels sat face to face. Why were they there? Why was that place so dear to them? Why did they look down with interest so intense upon the cold gray stone where Jesus had slept the sleep of death? Well, it was a matter which it behooved them to look into. The Christ who had lain there was their God as well as our Saviour. In that tomb his gospel had received its last confirmation. There he was declared to be "the Son of God with power." There he had seized and carried away the keys of death and hell.

As Mary sat there, indulging her bitter grief, the angels said, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Her reply was, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." While she was thus communing with the angels she heard a voice from behind: "Woman, why weepest thou?"

Supposing it to come from the gardener she turned around and said to him, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him." But when she heard that same voice pronounce the word, "Mary," she knew it was Jesus, and throwing herself at his feet, she cried, "Master, Master, Master!" Addressing her in the same affectionate tone, he said: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

When Mary Magdalene had delivered this sweet and comforting message to the disciples, she and "the other Mary" dropped out of view. They appear no more in the sacred record. But I am persuaded that, in the great company of the redeemed in heaven, there are none who stand closer to the glorified Christ than these two women.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ insures the resuscitation of all the dead. "Christ is risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept." "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Nothing less than this glorious assurance could comfort us in the loss of our loved ones.

The ancient pagans sorrowed without hope. A shattered pillar, a ship gone to pieces, a harp broken and tuneless, and a flower-bud crushed, were the sad emblems of their hopeless grief. But when we look

upon the mounds beneath which sleep the ashes of our dead, faith sees them sown with the seeds of immortality. Deathless flowers shall spring up there, and where we sowed with sorrow we shall reap with joy.

We died in the first Adam, but we shall live in the second Adam. We sink with the earthy, but we shall rise with the heavenly. The resurrection of Christ is God's pledge and proof of our own resurrection. He rose representatively, and as a specimen of renovated humanity, and we rise in the regular process of moral causation. "This corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality." "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

Is it possible for the human mind to conceive of a future more glorious than that which awaits the people of God? The "Elysian Fields" of Virgil, Homer's "sparkling rills of nectar," and the "Paradise" of Milton, with its perennial flowers and its eternal harps and hymns, are unattractive and repulsive in comparison with what this earth shall be when death and the grave have given up their prey and the tabernacle of God has descended to abide with men.

Then let our joy to-day be unconfined. Let sorrow cease and gladness rule the hour. Let our re-

deemed spirits rise on wings of faith and love and join the songsters of the skies.

Awake, thou wintry earth,
  Fling off thy sadness ;
Fair vernal flowers, laugh forth
  Your ancient gladness.

Wave woods ! Ye blossoms all !
  Grim death is dead !
Ye weeping funeral trees,
  Lift up your head.

For "Christ is risen, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

XX

POWER OF A DESPISED DOCTRINE

"We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." 1 Cor. 1 : 23, 24.

It was not so much the Christ as Christ crucified that offended the Jews and Greeks. The Jews looked for a Messiah, and their dearest hopes were centered upon his mission; but a Messiah who would submit to arrest, insult, and scourging, and who would allow himself to be crucified between two thieves, they would not have. The Greeks would not have objected to a Messiah if he had come as a great statesman, warrior, and philosopher; but to call a peasant Jew, who had expired like other criminals on a Roman cross, the Messiah, was an insult to their pride and intelligence.

This despised doctrine was the one great theme of Paul's preaching. It was the very heart and soul of the faith for which he contended and suffered so heroically and died so gloriously.

The opposition of those ancient Jews and Greeks

to this feature of the gospel has been reproduced in every subsequent generation; but it has survived every assault, and to-day is the banner of a host which defies the world and the very gates of hell.

Recently one Mr. Buchanan, an English infidel, wrote a dolorous epitaph for the gravestone of the Christian religion. Other men have done the same thing in every age since Jesus on the cross bowed his head and gave up the ghost. David Hume's favorite exclamation was, "Christianity is dead!" Voltaire said that in fifty years there would scarcely be a trace of the religion of Jesus left in the world. But here it is before us to-day. If it is a corpse, as Mr. Buchanan declares it to be, it is a marvelously animated one. If we are in the midst of its funeral obsequies, there is an unaccountable jubilation in the ceremony. The procession is moving with a quicker step than was ever seen at any other funeral. The music is very unlike a requiem.

Joy to the world, the Lord is come.

All hail the power of Jesus' name.

Children of the heavenly king,
As ye journey sweetly sing.

Jesus, I love thy charming name;
'Tis music to mine ear;
Fain would I sound it out so loud,
That earth and heaven might hear.

These are strange songs for the world to be singing if Christianity is ready to be buried and epitaphed.

"We preach Christ crucified." Paul put the emphasis on crucified, because he knew that the saving power of the gospel was in the fact of the crucifixion. "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

He could have preached about the purity, gentleness, compassion, courage, and manliness of Jesus, but he knew that in such a discussion of him there was no power to convict, transform, and save. He knew that a man might believe anything that was true of the life and character of Christ, but if he omitted the fact that Christ was crucified, and that his death was a propitiation for the sins of the world, he would be untouched by the redeeming power of the gospel.

Paul did not undervalue any feature of our Lord's character, nor any saying of his lips, nor any act that he performed; but when he would show lost men the way of salvation, he saw nothing but the gory cross, the dying Lamb, and the cleansing blood. In fixing his mind and heart upon the death of the sacred victim, in giving it a sublime pre-eminence, in putting it into the very center of

God's great scheme of recovering mercy, he was in perfect harmony with the teachings of the divine author of the gospel.

Jesus, when unfolding the way of salvation to Nicodemus, said: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Only a week before his crucifixion he said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"; and the evangelist declares that Jesus said this to signify "what death he should die."

"The Son of man must be lifted up." The lifting up was an absolute necessity. It was in God's eternal plan of redemption, and if Jesus Christ had not been lifted up on the cross, not a human being could be saved. It was not essential to the scheme that Christ should preach a definite number of sermons and perform a definite number of miracles, but it was essential that he, "the just, should die for the unjust." Of this necessity he was profoundly conscious. He said to his disciples that he must go up to Jerusalem and be crucified and rise from the dead.

It was a terrible ordeal which he foresaw, and the night before his death the thought of it brought out a bloody sweat upon his brow, and constrained him to pray, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But as it was not possible for sal-

vation to be accomplished without it, and loving a guilty world better than himself, he bowed himself to the earth and said, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."

It is this lifting up of the Son of Man, his ignominious death on the cross, which renders the gospel we preach "foolishness" to some and a "stumbling-block" to others. They cannot see why a God of infinite resources should adopt such a scheme for redeeming the world. I suppose that the bitten and dying Israelites had about the same thought concerning the brazen serpent that was lifted up over their camp. "The Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."

That was a strange device to save people from the effects of a deadly poison in their veins. A strange thing to set before the eyes of men already filled with consternation and horror! The image of a serpent would serve only to remind them of their desperate condition, and to aggravate, rather than mitigate, their terrible sufferings.

Strange sermon it must have been that Moses preached to those wailing and despairing Israelites. "Ho, Israel! Look yonder! See lifted on that pole a picture of the loathsome, horrible creature which has bitten you, and injected into your blood

its deadly venom! Look at that forked tongue darted into the air! See those keen fangs! Look at that head thrust out, ready to make the fatal dart! Look! Look! Look, and live!"

Strange sermon! Does it not sound like a mockery of the woes of the sick and dying people to whom it was delivered? And yet it was nothing less than a message from the living God. It was the revelation of God's remedy for their terrible scourge. Those who believed and obeyed the divine proclamation were instantly healed.

When they turned their dying eyes upon the pole in the midst of the camp they saw the serpent, but there was no anger in its eye, there was no venom on its lips, there was no fury in its tongue, and there was no enmity in its twisted form. To the eye of the believer, that image was transformed into an object that was radiant with divine love and mercy. Looking upon it, he felt at once the healing power of a good and gracious God.

The brazen serpent, lifted up above the bitten and perishing Israelites, was a type of Jesus Christ, who many centuries afterward was lifted up on Calvary. He was lifted up for the redemption of a guilty and lost world. He was lifted up that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." If the lifting up of the serpent was a strange device, this is infinitely stranger.

How are guilty and wrath-deserving men to be saved? By looking at an object far more revolting and harrowing to human sensibility than a brazen serpent. They are saved by fixing the eye of faith on a cross, a huge gibbet, dripping with human blood, and upon which hangs a man charged with crime, a supposed conspirator, mocked, derided, and hooted out of the world.

Paul stood in the midst of Jews and Greeks and said, "That despised being, who hung upon that instrument of shame and torture, is the world's only hope. He is the only being in all the universe who can pardon your sins and save your guilty souls. Whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

In every subsequent age men commissioned of God have gone through the world with the same message. Eighteen centuries have passed since Paul fell asleep, but I can stand here to-day and face men with the same confidence and boldness in declaring that the despised Nazarene, who was crucified between two thieves, and who was deemed less worthy of life than Barabbas, is man's only Redeemer, and "that he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." We, the living ministry of the nineteenth century, are commissioned to say to men covered with the leprosy of sin, and sinking down into the darkness and

woes of the second death, "Lift up your heads and look at him who hangs on yonder cross, and ye shall be healed and saved."

No other view of him will bring salvation. It is important that you view him in every event of his earthly history and in every act of his mediatorial career. See him as a babe in the manger, when that new star appears and rolls up the eastern sky and shines immediately over his birthplace. See him in the temple at the age of twelve years, a prodigy of earnestness, asking questions of the doctors of the law. See him descending into the Jordan to be baptized of John. See him as he comes up "straightway out of the water," while the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove rests upon him, and a voice from the "excellent glory" exclaims, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." See him on the mountain speaking a wisdom surpassing all that the world had ever heard, words which inspired men to say, "Never man spake like this man." See him feeding the multitudes with a few loaves and fishes. See him healing the lepers, opening the eyes of the blind, treading the mad waves of Galilee, quelling the storm, and raising the dead. See him in the splendor of his transfiguration, enrobed in blinding beauty, his countenance shining as the sun, and his whole being luminous with the glory of the highest heaven.

But you will never know his saving power and feel his divine life communicated to your secret soul until you see him crucified. You will never know the joy of salvation until you see him lifted up to the malice of earth, the fury of hell, and the wrath of heaven. It is only in such a vision of him that you see your own sins in all of their hideous vileness. Beholding him there, as the victim of your iniquity, you see your guilt not only condemned, but forgiven and obliterated forever.

That in which we who are called and whose spiritual eyes have been opened, see the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation, is and ever will be, to the Jew spirit, "a stumbling-block," and to the Greek spirit, "foolishness."

Infidels may call the preaching of salvation by the crucifixion of Christ "foolishness," but they dare not say that those who believe in it are fools. They dare not say that such men as Lord Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton, John Milton, Sir William Hamilton, William E. Gladstone, George Washington, Stonewall Jackson, and Robert E. Lee are fools. It is a significant fact that millions of living men, who once joined the haughty Greeks in pronouncing Christ crucified foolishness, now see in it the saving wisdom and power of God. How do you account for the conversion of such men? Do you say there was some unaccountable paralysis of their

intellectual powers which rendered them capable of believing an absurdity? The facts warrant no such conclusion.

How do you account for the fact that the nations whose civilization is shaped by this doctrine are pre-eminent in intellectual culture and power? How do you account for the fact that the nations which have sunk into weakness, ignorance, and stupidity are those that reject this doctrine, and that the nations which receive it as the wisdom of the living God have developed into magnificent prosperity and strength?

A Chicago newspaper, which is the organ of American barkeepers, gamblers, and adulterers, contains the following editorial paragraph:

"Churches, whose preaching and worship have become a chestnut, cannot reasonably hope to compete with Sunday baseball, Sunday picnics, Sunday theatres, and Sunday saloons."

I am ready to admit that the church in which "Christ and him crucified is preached," does not attract as many people as the Sunday baseball, or the Sunday theatre, or the Sunday saloon. But I ask the Chicago editor who gives vent to his fiendish delight over this ignominious fact, to compare the effects of the Sunday baseball, the Sunday theatre, and the Sunday saloon upon human character and social order, purity, and peace with those of the

gospel of the crucified Christ. I suppose that such a comparison would open the eyes of such as he even to the truth that Christ is a better friend to humanity than Belial.

No, the gospel does not draw so many as these Sunday iniquities which are so dear to the Chicago editor; but, thank God, those whom it does attract it draws in a different direction. It draws them from darkness into light, from bondage into freedom, from uncleanness into purity, from the grossest animalhood into the noblest manhood, from the agony of fear into the joy of hope, from confusion and unrest into order and peace, from self to God, and from earth to heaven.

The Sunday saloon, the Sunday baseball, and the Sunday theatre are the devil's incubators which are hatching out the numerous villainies that curse the countries in which they are tolerated. They are the devil's training-schools, in which young men and young women are fitted for a life of degradation and infamy.

Christ crucified is the magnet which has lifted into purity and strength the men and women who have put into the world's civilization all that gives to it brightness, beauty, and permanence. It is the divine force that has established the colossal pillars that support the whole fabric of refined and virtuous social life.

The preaching of the doctrine of Christ crucified has generated the agencies and influences which have thrown open prison doors, unfettered slaves, and given to many of the nations of the earth civil and religious freedom. In this despised doctrine is the power which is destined to smite every form of infidelity and skepticism with a deadly paralysis, and that will, sooner or later, make this corrupt and apostate world as pure and beautiful as it was when God looked out from the heavens and pronounced it good.

"We preach Christ crucified." Why? Because it is the only doctrine that can save a soul from death. I am sometimes told by one man to preach the justice of God, and by another to preach the love of God. I do preach divine justice and divine love; but you may believe in both and never be saved. You must believe in and rest upon that exhibition of God's love and justice which is seen in the sacrificial death of God's beloved Son.

It would have availed the poor Israelites nothing if they had looked to Moses or to God himself and refused to look at the provision which divine love and mercy had made for their healing. They recovered from their deadly malady only when they turned their eyes upon the brazen serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness.

Look not to God in the flowers; look not to God

in the stars; look not to God in rainbows and sunset halos. Seeing him there will bring no redemption to your guilty souls. Look to God on Calvary's gory summit; look to God in the person of the man, Christ Jesus, who bare your sins in his own body upon yonder cross, and by whose cleansing blood you may be made as pure as the whitest seraph that sings in the heavenly choir.

Look! Look! Look! Oh, there is life in a look at the crucified One! Look! Look! And presently you will feel the touch of a power that will send a vibration of joy to the deepest sources of your being. Look! Look! And presently there will be a flash of glory from that crown of thorns that will turn your darkness into day. Look! Look! And presently, beyond that cross, you will see a golden gateway opening into a world of cherubim. Look! Look! And presently within that temple of beauty you will see an archangel writing your name in the book of everlasting life.

XXI

SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." John 8 : 32–34.

Our Lord was speaking of spiritual bondage and freedom when he said, "The truth shall make you free"; but the Jews were too carnalized to perceive his meaning. They supposed that his words had reference to political bondage, and they quickly resented the insinuation that they were then, or ever had been, politically enslaved. They said, "We are Abraham's children, and were never in bondage to any man." They were blind to the facts of their temporal condition and history.

Had they forgotten Egypt, and the four hundred years in which they groaned under the yoke of Egyptian taskmasters? Had they forgotten Babylon, where they were carried captive, and the seventy years in which they hung their harps on the

willows and prayed God to restore them to their native land? What was their condition at the very time at which they boastfully declared that they were never in bondage to any man? Had they forgotten Cæsar and Pilate and Herod? Were they oblivious of Roman eagles looking down upon them from towered heights? Were they deaf to the sound of Roman bugles, and to the tramp of Roman legions along their highways? To whom did they pay tribute? Who was their royal master? A son of David? or an alien, a stranger, an intruder, and a pagan?

Jesus recognized the reality of moral slavery throughout the whole world of mankind, and offers his gospel to men as the only means by which they could secure moral emancipation. But the average man resents the idea that he is morally enslaved, and those whose bondage is the most abject and deplorable are the most boastful of their freedom. In this "land of the free and home of the brave," where every man claims to be "lord and monarch of himself," we find the extremest types of moral servitude and debasement.

Far be it from me to undervalue political freedom. I believe that not only the humanity-loving millions of earth, but the angels and glorified spirits of heaven rejoice, when any people rid themselves of the galling yoke of political despotism.

When all Greece had assembled to behold the Isthmian games, a crier stood up in the center of the vast multitude and read the following decree:

"The Senate and people of Rome, and Titus, their general, do give liberty and immunity to all the cities of Greece that were under the jurisdiction of Philip." This proclamation was received with shouts and hosannas that shook the solid earth and made the welkin ring. The historian says, "The birds, flying in the air above the scene, were so affected by the acclamations of the rejoicing multitude, that they fell dead to the ground."

Freedom! How that glorious word warms our blood and quickens our pulse.

Go ring the bells and fire the guns,
And fling the starry banner out;
Shout, freedom! till your lisping ones
Give back their cradle shout.

Better to dwell in freedom's hall,
With a cold, damp floor, and moulding wall,
Than bow the head and bend the knee
In the proudest palace of slaverie.

Alas! Millions echo these sentiments who are slaves in a sense they know not of. Millions who would open their veins and pour a libation of their blood on the altar of civil freedom, are in abject bondage to their own depraved appetites and passions. Loaded with chains of corruption, and led

captive by the devil at his will, they yet boast of their freedom, and tell us that they were "never in bondage to any man."

If I should go to the palace of yonder millionaire, who is clothed in purple and fares sumptuously every day, and before whom a sycophantic world is ever bowing to the dust, he would spurn me from his presence if I should intimate that he was subject to any bondage. But notwithstanding he is so proud and boastful, I know him to be the meanest of slaves. His whole mind and moral being are utterly servile to an evil passion, a corrupt purpose, and a tyrannical habit.

Take another illustration. Take Robert G. Ingersoll, whose free-thinking has carried him to the point not only of rejecting revealed religion, but of denouncing it as the source of the world's greatest evils. With an air of contempt for our weakness he tells us that he has verified the proposition of our text as to the emancipating power of truth. He asserts that by the exercise of his own reason he has satisfied himself that any belief in a divine revelation is a delusion, that what we call a revelation from God is an imposition on human ignorance and credulity, that the New Testament account of the miracles of Christ is a fabrication of lies, that the judgment to come and heaven and hell are the creations of priestcraft, and that human immortality is

a superstition which should not be dignified with a serious thought. He declares that he is supremely proud of his own freedom from the fetters of all of these mischievous delusions. All this has Mr. Ingersoll said, and a thousand things besides, too profane and irreverent to be repeated in this presence. Alas! His infidelity has done more than emancipate him from the fear of God, judgment, and eternity. It has freed him from the fear of doing wrong, and from all reverence for virtue, rectitude, and honor. He stands before this nation to-day as the apologist and defender of vice and crime. He glories in the privilege of using the witchery of his eloquent speech in defending and promoting principles and practices, the prevalence of which would utterly destroy social purity, order, and happiness.

The primal function of truth is to reveal to men their moral condition. It is only in the light of divine truth that they discover the degradation and bondage into which sin has brought them. But as this discovery is only the beginning of moral emancipation, how vast and difficult is the work to be accomplished by gospel truth! We live and move and have our being in a world of slaves. Who can number the prison doors to be opened, the bars of brass to be cut asunder, and the bands of steel to be broken?

If the gospel of Jesus Christ is the divinely ap-

pointed instrument for the deliverance of the enslaved millions of our race, what friend of humanity can refrain from saying, "O Lord God, merciful and gracious, send forth the light of thy truth into all the world."

There is a slavery of misconception and delusion, from which men are freed only by the light of the gospel. There was a period of my childhood when I lived in constant dread of an imaginary monster which my Negro nurse had named "Raw-Head-and Bloody-Bones." To me that imaginary monster seemed to be a reality. One night I saw him, as I looked up the stairway into the garret. Under this bondage I lived, a nervous, gloomy, unhappy child, until my Christian mother told me that there was no such creature as "Raw-Head-and-Bloody-Bones," and that what I had seen as I looked up into the garret, was something which the servant had put there to frighten me.

The untutored savage is in bondage to fear when he witnesses an eclipse of the sun. Give him the scientific explanation of this phenomenon, enlighten him with scientific truth, and he will be freed from the pangs of fear. The superstitious Negro flees from the marsh-lamp's fitful flame, believing it to be the ghost of his grandmother. Reveal to his mind the natural causes which produce that flame, and it will be no longer to him an object of terror.

Papal Rome sways her scepter over millions of human beings who are kept in bondage to priestcraft by the delusion that to their spiritual masters are committed the keys of heaven and hell. Set before their minds the gospel truth that there is but "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," and that "he openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth," and they will break away from their bondage into the liberty of the true sons of God.

When John Knox began the Reformation in Glasgow, the Romanists of that city believed that if a heretic should touch the bell in the great tower, he would instantly fall dead to the ground. John Knox told them that if they would lower the bell into the street, he would not only touch it, but smite it. They accepted his challenge, believing that they would thus easily dispose of an arch-heretic. They removed the bell from the tower to the street, and Knox, in the presence of a vast crowd, approached it, smote it again and again, pronouncing at every stroke his anathema upon the pope and the priests. By this peculiar device Knox freed the people of that city from a pernicious delusion, and prepared them to receive the truth which made them forever a community of Protestants.

Truth is essential to salvation. Men must have right conceptions of God. Belief in an imper-

sonal, pantheistic deity, will not lift the sinful soul out of its degradation and bondage. Men who believe that God is fitly represented by that pagan image in the British Museum, which has twelve hands, and in each hand an instrument of torture, will never abhor vice and love virtue. Not until a man sees the personality, fatherhood, holiness, love, and mercy of God, revealed in the person of the man Christ Jesus, can he have any desire to obey and honor God.

But the truth of God, to be effective, must be applied to the heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit. The truth is the sword, and the Spirit is the power that wields it.

Jesus Christ said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." He means not literally every man in the world, but men of every class and condition. The lifting up of Christ is our work; the drawing is the work of God's Spirit. Both are indispensable. If Christ is not lifted up by the preaching of the gospel to lost men, the Holy Spirit will not draw them, and without his drawing power the lifting up will be in vain. We cannot over-estimate the quickening, subduing, and transforming power of gospel truth, when it is applied to the conscience by the Holy Spirit.

When I look about me in this depraved world, I see some types of moral servitude which men call

hopeless. I see the miser hugging his gold with an affection that is absolutely blind and stupid. At midnight, when good men sleep, and light-winged dreams ascend to God and heaven, he sits bending over his heap of glittering dust, wrapped in rags and from vigilance and fasting worn to skin and bones.

I see the drunkard. On his bloated face all the hideous heraldry of vice is stamped. Unmoved by the tears of his wife and the cries of his beggared babes, he goes on from debauch to debauch, from madness to madness, until he would barter the blood in his veins for one more drink.

I see the harlot, lost to virtue and dead to shame, defying alike the scorn of men and the frown of God. In the frenzy of her sin and woe, she curses her natal day, curses the mother who gave her birth, curses the dumb earth beneath her feet, and the gentle stars that shine above her head.

I see the felon whose feet have slipped in human gore, and on whose face the darkest histories are written. To-morrow he will ascend the scaffold and die a felon's death; and yet there is no tear in his eye, nor contrition in his heart.

Do you tell me that for such there is no redemption? If you do, you limit the power of God's truth and need a better faith. The annals of our blessed Christianity contain the names of misers, drunkards, harlots, thieves, and murderers,

who, under the influence of the glorious gospel of the Son of God, became new creatures, attained to great purity and beauty of character, and went down to their graves with words of triumph.

My friend, what is your condition to-day? Are your fetters gone? Are you free?

> He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
> And all are slaves beside.

"If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." In the light of God's truth, have you seen and felt your guilt and folly, and with true penitence of heart lifted your eyes to him who said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth"? Do you grasp with appropriating faith the blessed truth that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"? Is there a principle of life within you which impels you in the path of obedience to God, and that empowers you to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan"?

With confidence and joy do you look forward to the day when death shall be swallowed up in victory, and when you shall be caught up in the air to meet your glorified Lord and Redeemer? If to these questions you can answer yea, I pronounce you free. You know the truth, and the truth has made you free. You are in God's keeping, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you.

XXII

DELIVERANCE FROM EVIL

"Deliver us from evil." Luke 11 : 4.

The existence of evil in this world is a problem with which no philosophy has successfully grappled. It stands before us a wall of darkness on which there falls not one beam of light. In their unsuccessful efforts to explain the mystery some men have reached the conclusion that the universe is godless. Others have become misanthropic and abandoned themselves to a career of dissipation and self-destruction.

Why God permitted evil to come into the world is a secret which he holds in the infinite depths of his own bosom. Neither in his written revelation nor in the volume of nature has he given the faintest clue to this mystery.

While it is an insoluble mystery it is a tremendous reality. We cannot ignore it. It stands out distinctly before us in a thousand different forms. All of our material senses take cognizance of it. It is in our flesh and blood and bone and brain. The

earth is full of it. Wasted lands, blight and famine, plague and earthquake, angry seas and sinking ships, burning cities and bloody battlefields, are objects too real and appalling to be ignored.

In the Bible we have the record of the entrance of evil into the world, an epitomized history of its progress through a period of four thousand years, and prophecies of its future career up to the time when the great globe itself and all that it inherits shall dissolve and pass away. Every page of secular history is stained with crime and blotted with blood. There we see how tyrants' feet have slipped in human gore, and how the best and noblest of our race have suffered the many ills to which flesh is heir.

All about us to-day are faces lettered with sorrow and stamped with shame. Nothing but the fear of the iron fist of law keeps a large element of the very best of communities from riot and sedition. The existence of three or four hundred dens of vice in the city in which I speak is enough to convince us that devils still tabernacle in human flesh and that much of this world's territory is under Satanic dominion.

Our daily newspapers are chronicles of current evil. Their chief business is to tell us how nations defraud nations, how politicians victimize each other by unrighteous trickery, how huge business monopo-

lies enslave the toiling masses, how lust clamors for unrestrained freedom, how bank vaults and State treasuries are depleted by embezzlement, how drunken husbands murder their wives, how women despise motherhood, and how by assassination governments are deprived of their executive heads.

Stranger than the existence of these evils is the fact that so many men live in comparative unconsciousness of them. Immersed in sensuality, or insane with the greed of gain, or bewitched by siren songs of splendor and pleasure, they seem not to recognize the fact that they are out on an ocean of merciless whirlpools. They seem not to know that they are tenants of a world where every pathway leads to peril, where every human habitation is shadowed by sorrow, where all beauty is fading into darkness, and all life is sinking into dust. Not until men awake to a sense of these awful realities can they comprehend and appreciate the tremendous significance of the prayer, "Deliver us from evil."

In discussing this subject, my first endeavor will be to help you to recognize the dread reality which God calls "evil," and the awful disasters with which it threatens us, both in this life and in the vaster life to come.

I prefer the Revised version, which reads: "Deliver us from the evil one." Our danger is from

something more formidable and fearful than evil. It is from the evil one, a mighty and malignant personality who stands behind all that men call evil. In the absence of this personality nothing would be evil, everything would be good.

Whenever I touch upon the doctrine of the personality of the devil, some objector is heard from who seems never to have thought of the subject in the light of divine revelation. They seem to be utterly forgetful that they have ever read that Jesus was tempted of the devil on the mountain, and that he said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan," and that the inspired writers always speak of the devil as a person.

Who is this evil one? He is the enemy, for that is the meaning of the word Satan. He is the tempter who deceives, seduces, and entraps the human soul. He is the accuser who brands, blackens, and blasts men with the very sins into which he leads them. He is the Apollyon, the destroyer who scorches men with his envenomed breath and pierces them through with his deadly darts.

Young man, the invisible enemy that drags you every night into a gambler's den is no myth. A hundred times, perhaps, you have resolved that you would never enter that den again; but something mightier than your own will gets into you and compels you to go.

Go to that young bank cashier, once the idol of a fashionable social circle, but now an incarcerated felon, loaded with infamy and despised by the people who helped to destroy him, and he will tell you that some malign spirit entered into him, dethroned his will, and constrained him to do what his own judgment and conscience condemned.

Forty years ago there was a little girl in southern Alabama whose beauty and loveliness were almost angelic. If I had wanted to paint a picture of human innocence I could not have found a better model. She was the child of wealthy, cultured, and distinguished parents. She was reared in an atmosphere of Christian piety. The influences which surrounded her childhood, girlhood, and young womanhood were exceptionally pure and helpful. Twelve years ago she was sentenced by an English court to lifelong imprisonment for the crime of taking the life of her own husband. Ask her to account for the commission of that horrible deed, and she will tell you that some invisible fiend took possession of her, deprived her of self-control, and forced her to the fatal step.

Young man, the evil one has not yet dragged you into a criminal life. No court has sentenced you to wear a convict's garb and sleep in a felon's cell; and yet your life may be one of real subjection to Satanic power. If you are habitually untruthful,

or dishonest, or intemperate, or licentious, you are the devil's captive; you are doing his unrighteous bidding; you are completely in his power; and you are in imminent danger of becoming as degraded and vicious as the men whom public justice has branded with felony.

Young woman, your record so far may be unsullied by any disgraceful act. In the eyes of men you may be as pure as the white flowers with which you are wont to adorn yourself; and yet the evil one may at this moment possess your mind and heart. If your master passion is the love of social distinction and the fleeting pleasures of the gay and giddy throng, if the novel has more charms for you than the word of God, and the festive hall is more attractive to your soul than the sanctuary of prayer, then may you well pray to be delivered from the evil one, for his power is over you.

If there is one before me to-day in whose breast avarice or malice or the lust of worldly power and fame is the reigning passion, I hesitate not to say to him: "You are Satan's fettered slave; you are in danger of incurable degradation in this life and of remediless wretchedness in the endless life beyond the tomb."

I rejoice that I am divinely commissioned to stand here to-day and declare that God's infinite mercy has provided deliverance for every one who will

penitently and gratefully accept it. What that deliverance is and how to secure it are questions which demand immediate and most thoughtful consideration.

The old Epicureans made evil identical with discomfort and the avoidance of personal pain the chief end of life. Their only idea of deliverance from evil was escape, as far as possible, from every painful or unpleasant experience. Their theory was utterly false. The man who attempts to hide from or go around disagreeable things does not escape them. It is painful to resist temptation, but submission to it will bring experiences still more painful. It troubles you to discipline your disobedient child, but the neglect of discipline will bring upon you more serious troubles.

The theory of the Stoics was, that pain is no evil and that happiness is no good. No relief is found in this doctrine, for the simple reason that no man of sound mind can believe it. When I have toothache, not even an angel from heaven could convince me that the anguish of such an affliction is not evil. When I am peaceful and happy, it is impossible to convince me that it is not good to be in such a state.

The Christian Science theory is, that evil is a myth. The apostles of it would tell you that any one who believes in it can step into a fire and remain there for an indefinite period without any sen-

sation of pain. If the Christian Scientists of Nashville will furnish a man who will undertake such a demonstration of the utility of their religion, I will invite this entire congregation to witness the exhibition; and if it should prove successful, I will exhort each one of you to become a Christian Scientist. Until such a demonstration is made, I shall continue to affirm that only people of unsound minds can be persuaded to subscribe to such a creed.

Christianity is free from all such absurdities. It recognizes the reality of evil and utters no word of protest against those natural emotions which are excited by contact with it. When from the brow of Olivet Christ looked down upon Jerusalem and foresaw its destruction, he wept. If he had been a Christian Scientist, he would not have wept. To him the suffering and slaughter of half a million human beings was evil—a stupendous evil—and he could not contemplate it without the deepest emotions of sorrow. He believed, and he taught, that death was an evil. Hence we see him weeping at the grave of his Bethany friend. He pitied the sick, the poor, and persecuted, because he believed sickness, poverty, and persecution to be evils. He denounced lying, hypocrisy, theft, adultery, and despotism, because he knew them to be evils.

How does Christ deliver us from evil? Not by removing evil from the world in which we live.

He has nowhere promised to remove it. Until the end of time there will be disease, famine, strife, war, persecution, tribulation, and anguish.

Christians are as liable to all these forms of evil as infidels. Moody is just as liable to be caught in a railroad wreck as Robert Ingersoll. A ship freighted with Christian missionaries is just as much exposed to ocean storms as one carrying a band of merciless pirates. "Evils, in their external forms, happen alike to the good and the bad, to the wise and the foolish." Christ does not deliver us from evil by removing us from contact with it, but by uniting us to himself by a living faith, by letting his life into our life, and thereby raising us above the dominion and power of the evil one. Delivered from Satanic power nothing that is evil can overcome us or prevent us from being peaceful and happy.

To the wicked and godless man persecution is unmitigated evil. There is nothing in him to mollify the anguish of it; but when the Christian is "persecuted for righteousness' sake," he can rejoice and be exceeding glad. The joy which comes to him from his union with Christ, and from the consciousness of Christ's supporting grace, more than compensates him for the wrongs which he endures.

Physical sickness, to the ungodly man, is unmitigated evil. Conscious that he deserves it and with-

out faith in a divine Helper, he has not one drop of comfort. To the child of God physical sickness is a "light affliction." It is light because of the relief which comes to him from the consciousness of God's presence, and from the belief that his suffering is a divine discipline that will work out for him "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Look at Byron. He was young, beautiful, and famous. As a poet he had gifts which lifted him above every other poet of his time.

> He seemed to stoop to touch the loftiest thought,
> Stood on the Alps; stood on the Apennines;
> And with the thunder talked as friend to friend.
> He laid his hand upon "the ocean's mane,"
> And played familiar with his hoary locks.

But never was there a life more wicked and wretched than his. His years were all winter, his rest all labor, and his sleep all nightmare. At the age of thirty-three he wrote these plaintive lines, expressive of his own experience:

> My days are in the yellow leaf;
> The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief,
> Are mine alone.
>
> The fire that on my bosom preys,
> Is lone as some volcanic isle.
> No torch is kindled at its blaze—
> A funeral pile.

Verily, "there is no peace to the wicked." Why? Because they are under the power of the evil one, whose mission it is to disturb them, to make their evils doubly evil, and to instill into their every cup of pleasure drops of anguish.

Contrast their condition with that of the Lord's people, who are continually saying, "The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage." "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Every day we hear of suicides committed in prisons. Under the burden of disgrace which such bondage imposes upon them, men feel that life is not worth living and, rather than endure the ills they have, they fly to others they know not of.

The man who is delivered from the power of the evil one can never be provoked to take his own life. Paul and Silas were publicly whipped and then thrust into a Roman prison; but the cowardly thought of suicide had no place in their heroic minds. The faith that was in them transmuted their humiliation into glory, and their anguish into rapture. The presence of their living Lord illumined the darkness of their dungeon, and

turned their mourning into joy. Verily, they were delivered from evil. Their lives were hid with Christ in God, and Satan had no more dominion over them.

Look at Francis Xavier, in the midst of all the degradation, squalid wretchedness, and crime of the darkest region of India. See him there in the deepest poverty, and without access to a solitary human friend. Was he despondent? No. Did he murmur at his hard fate? No. At the point of his greatest extremity he wrote to his friends that his joy in the Lord was almost unbearable. Christ had so delivered him from the evil one that no adversity could disturb the sweet serenity of his exalted spirit.

Poverty is not an evil in itself. The best being that ever honored the earth with his footsteps was so poor that he had not where to lay his head. The winding sheet in which his dead body was wrapped, and the grave in which it was buried, were the gifts of charity. He chose poverty as a condition more desirable than wealth.

Martin Luther did not regard poverty as an evil *per se*. When about to die, he exclaimed: "I thank thee, O God, that thou hast made me a beggar on the earth."

Poverty is an evil only when it is connected with sin and unbelief. When a man is not only poor

but profane, wicked, unclean, and faithless, he is wretched indeed. The most joyless and pitiable being in all the world is a drunken, licentious, filthy-mouthed infidel pauper. What is true of poverty is equally true of every other earthly trial. No experience can be evil to us, if we are free from the evil one and are living by faith in the Son of God.

To have Christ in us, the hope of glory, is to have a source of serenity and joy that will not fail us in any of the exigencies that are possible to mortals here below.

Thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art, of all thy gifts,
Thyself the crown.
Give what thou wilt,
Without thee we are poor,
But with thee rich,
Take what thou wilt away.

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